



Parshas Vayera

October 26, 2018

A Taste of Torah

Unconstrained Kindness

by Rabbi Yosef Melamed

Imagine the following scenario: One day, your next door neighbor knocks on your door, asking to borrow a hammer. You graciously agree, and run to get your hammer. Upon receiving the hammer, your neighbor proceeds to break down the front door and windows of your house and smash your brand new car. The next day, your newfound “friend” knocks on your door, requesting once again to borrow your hammer. Would your reaction be to chase this brazen person out of your house, or would you instead run to get him your hammer with a smile? While most people would probably entertain the first option, our Sages teach us that G-d chose the second. The Medrash (Tanchuma Ki Sisa 14) teaches that when the Jews in the desert created the Golden Calf, they fed it the manna, the G-d-given bread that would fall from Heaven each morning. Talk about chutzpah! To take the miraculous bread sent by G-d Himself, and to use it as part of the worship of a foreign god! Yet, the Medrash brings a verse in Yechezkel (16:19) which teaches us that the manna still came down for the Jewish People like on any other day.

The great work *Tomer Devorah* (authored by Rabbi Moshe Cordovero; 1522-1570) focuses on the mitzvah of *vihalachta bidrachav*, following in Hashem’s ways. Rashi (Devarim 13:5), based on the Talmud (Sotah 14a), explains that the source of this mitzvah is actually from the words of the verse in Devarim (ibid.), “And to Him you shall cleave.” By emulating the ways of Hashem, we can attain the tremendous level of attaching ourselves to Hashem.

Based on this concept, Rabbi Elazar Menachem Shach (1899-2001) explains some puzzling ideas found in this week’s parsha. We learn of our forefather Avraham’s great desire to perform *chesed*, kindness. Despite the pain of the third day following circumcision and in the

scorching heat, Avraham is outside searching for travelers. Furthermore, the Talmud (Bava Metzia 86b) teaches that initially, Avraham sent his servant Eliezer to see if there were any guests approaching. The Talmud goes on to say that Eliezer was unsuccessful in his quest and returned to Avraham empty-handed. Not trusting Eliezer, Avraham proceeded to look for guests on his own.

The question here is obvious. That Avraham was ready to forget about his own pain and help someone out is one thing. But in this case, there simply were no guests to be found! Hashem had made it extremely hot to deter wayfarers, thus sparing Avraham the bother of caring for them during his recovery from circumcision. Even Avraham’s trusted servant Eliezer, with whom, our Sages tell us (Yoma 28b), Avraham entrusted the great task of disseminating his teachings, was unsuccessful in his search for guests. If there was no one in need of help, why was Avraham so intent on performing *chesed*? Isn’t the purpose of *chesed* to fill someone else’s needs?

Rabbi Shach answers that when one does an act of kindness, he is not simply doing an ordinary mitzvah. The Talmud (Sotah ibid.) teaches us that the beginning of Torah is kindness and the end of Torah is kindness. The beginning of Torah tells that Hashem fashioned clothing for Adam and Chava to wear. The Torah finishes with Hashem burying Moshe. Thus, one who performs kindness with his fellow man is fulfilling the commandment of “and to Him you shall cleave.” Hashem acts with *chesed*, and by performing *chesed*, we emulate Hashem. By emulating Hashem, we merit to cleave to Him!

The Ramchal (Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto; 1707-1746), in his work *Derech Hashem* (Ch. 2), teaches that Hashem created a world of kindness. Hashem is all powerful and has no need for this world.

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Stories for the Soul

Life-Saving Kindness

Rabbi Chaim Kreiswirth (1918-2001) related the tale of his escape at the outbreak of World War II. As he was making an attempt to leave Poland, he was caught by a Wehrmacht SS soldier, who immediately took him to his commanding officer. The latter would shoot any Jew who was unfortunate enough to be brought before him.

This time however, the officer began to laugh wickedly. “Oh, I’m fed up with seeing killed Jews here in my office,” he declared. “Just take him to the outskirts of town and kill him there.”

Rabbi Kreiswirth was handed over to one of the Nazi soldiers, who led him to the edge of the town.

As they walked, Rabbi Kreiswirth prayed to Hashem to save him, and he tried to recall a mitzvah whose merit would stand him in good stead in those desperate moments.

He recalled that at one point, when he lived in Warsaw, he was asked by a local rabbi to care for a sick old man. Rabbi Kreiswirth gave up his own bed for the ill man, tended to his needs and served him devotedly for several weeks, until the man succumbed and passed away. Rabbi Kreiswirth grabbed hold of that incident, and prayed that G-d have mercy and save him in the merit of that selfless act.

As he finished his prayer, they reached the edge of the town. Suddenly, the soldier accompanying Rabbi Kreiswirth said to him, “I have a wife and children at home. I understand your feelings.” He then shot three times into the air to make it seem as though he had shot his prisoner.

“Run!” hissed the Nazi sharply. And run he did. Rabbi Kreiswirth ran throughout the night without

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Kollel Happenings

TORAH BY THE MOON

A night out for couples to engage in Torah learning! Men join Rabbi Shmuel Halpern for Tractate Brachos in Halacha and Aggada. Women attend *Chassidus in Real Life* with Rabbi Moshe Heyman. Mondays, 8-9 pm at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center, 4902 S. Xenia St. For more info visit denverkollel.org or email Rabbi Heyman, rmh@denverkollel.org.

RABBI REISMAN WEEKLY IN DENVER

Join thousands around the globe in listening to the renowned weekly Navi shiur of Rabbi Yaakov Reisman! Rabbi Reisman's weekly Motzoei Shabbos class is shown at Beth Jacob High School, 5100 W. 14th Ave., this week at 8:30 pm. For sponsorships and info, contact info@denverkollel.org.

SFAS EMES: A PIERCING LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

It is one of the most widely-studied works of our time. Sfas Emes gives us a glimpse into the infinite depths of Torah and Jewish thought. Kollel Scholar Rabbi Avraham Dovid Karnowsky is an expert in this great work, and a master in bringing its timeless lessons into daily life. Join Rabbi Karnowsky on Thursdays, 8:15-9 pm at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center, 4902 S. Xenia St.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: Did the *mon* (manna) fall for the Jews in the Desert on Yom Tov (holidays), and what practical halachic application does this have?

A: The Torah tells us that *mon* (manna) did not fall on Shabbos. Tosafos (Eiruvin 38b) quotes a disagreement in Midrashim whether the *mon* fell on Yom Tov. The requirement of *lechem mishna* (using two loaves at the Shabbos meal) is in commemoration of the double portion of *mon* which fell each Friday in preparation for Shabbos. Our custom of requiring

lechem mishna on Yom Tov (see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 529:1) is based on the sources that the *mon* "rested" on Yom Tov, as well.

This week's question: For the requirement of *lechem mishna* (using two loaves at the Shabbos meal), we use two "complete" loaves (see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 274:1). How can one mistakenly slice a *challah* completely through yet subsequently fulfill the requirement with it?

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

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Moshe Sofer, the Chasam Sofer - Part XVII

"My father would not have gone to all this trouble if he was planning on bringing me home soon," sobbed the son. "It seems that he plans on leaving

me in exile for a much longer period than I had hoped, so he is providing me with these luxuries for my extended stay."

A Taste of Torah

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He created this world specifically so that He could do kindness with its inhabitants. This means that Hashem's attribute of kindness goes so far as to even create beings who can receive His kindness. Thus, by seeking to do *chesed* even when there was no recipient who was in need of that kindness, Avraham was emulating Hashem!

This explains the surprising statement of the Talmud (Shabbos 127a) that "attending to guests is greater than receiving the *Shechina* (Divine Presence)." The Talmud tells us that in the above episode, Hashem had come to visit Avraham. Avraham, seeing three travelers, asks Hashem to wait for him as he attends to his guests - indicating that attending to guests is greater than receiving the *Shechina*. This seems mindboggling. How could attending

to wayfarers be greater than basking in the light of the *Shechinah*?

According to the above explanation, this is not puzzling at all. Yes, it is an amazing level to be in the presence of the *Shechinah*, but that does not compare to actually attaching oneself to G-d. By staying with the *Shechinah*, Avraham would have only merited a dialogue with G-d. By helping his guests, Avraham could be attached to Him!

In light of these insights, we gain a new appreciation of the mitzvah of *chesed*. By seeking to help other people in all situations and by going out of our way to see if there is anything we are not aware of that we can help others with, we will merit achieving the dazzling level of attaching ourselves to Hashem!

Stories for the Soul

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stopping, until he reached the relative safety of the next town. He made his way to Vilna, where he married, and eventually emigrated to what was then Palestine. Rabbi Kreiswirth later became

one of the great Torah leaders of his time. Our forefather Avraham implanted the trait of *chesed*, loving-kindness, in the Jewish People. It has stood us in good stead throughout history.

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