

More than emulating the Avot...

It isn't just a matter of our doing things like Avraham did. It isn't "be hospitable" because Avraham and Sara welcomed guests. What the Avot and Imahot did, often is a definition of being a Jew. A Jew doesn't do what Avraham did; he becomes the kind of person and Jew that Avraham was. (Can be said of the other Avot, but we'll stick with Avraham, as this week's sedra does.)

Maybe it is even more than that. G-d wants us to be faithful to Him, to keep His Torah, to live by its values, to observe its mitzvot. So too does G-d want us to be (in some way) the kind of person that Avraham was. And it goes way beyond being a gracious host. It should include making a personal discovery of G-d - even if one is an FFB (frum from birth) and has grown up in an observant home, and continues to be Torah observant. There still is room and need for each Jew to personalize his relationship and feelings about G-d, thereby enhancing his commitment and resolve to live a Jewish life... and to encourage others to do the same.

Remember that Avraham and Sara did not just run a soup kitchen or a free restaurant and inn (although those things are great acts of Chesed on their own). They combined their hospitality with teaching others belief in one G-d. They looked after the spiritual well-being of the stranger as well as his physical needs. These two goals can be worked towards at the same time - sharing Divrei Torah with guests. Setting the right kind of example to others whom you welcome into your home. And the goals can also be pursued separately. The Jew is duti- bound to perform various acts of loving kindness and to learn and teach Torah to others. Some people are cut out for one or the other - some do both admirably.

Avraham and Sara were caring people and good Jews. They help define what it is to be a Jew. The Torah tells us about the Avot and Imahot to provide us with constant lessons for Jewish Life. Look at their commitment to G-d, to Eretz Yisrael, to mitzvot, to Chesed.

Word of the Month

A weekly feature of Torah Tidbits to help clarify practical and conceptual aspects of the Jewish Calendar, thereby better fulfilling the mitzva of HaChodesh HaZeh Lachem...

As we will hopefully be getting a nice amount of blessed rain during this rainy season, let us review some basic aspects of the "mention" of rainfall in the Amida of every day, and the request for rain in the weekday Amida. If one is not sure whether he said Mashiv HaRu'ach Umorid HaGashem or not - or even if one knows for sure that he forgot to say it - one does not say the Amida over because we may assume that we said Morid HaTal if we didn't say MHUH, and that acknowledges G-d's role as weather-maker, and the Amida is not invalid. (This assumes that one says Morid HaTal between Pesach and Sukkot.) However, forgetting Tal Umatar during the rainy season invalidates the Amida and one must say it over. There are many other details, but no room to review them in this box.

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Candle Lighting and HAVDALA
Standard (Winter) time



Correct for TT 739 • Rabbeinu Tam (l'm) - 5:56pm

4:08pm	Jerusalem	5:20pm
4:23pm	Raanana	5:21pm
4:23pm	Beit Shemesh	5:21pm
4:23pm	Netanya	5:20pm
4:24pm	Rehovot	5:21pm
4:03pm	Petach Tikva	5:21pm
4:23pm	Modi'in	5:20pm
4:25pm	Be'er Sheva	5:22pm
4:22pm	Gush Etzion	5:20pm
4:23pm	Ginot Shomron	5:21pm
4:08pm	Maale Adumim	5:19pm
4:23pm	K4 & Hevron	5:21pm
4:09pm	Tzfat	5:17pm

OTHER Z'MANIM

Correct for Jerusalem

Ranges are FRI-FRI • 19-26 Cheshvan • (Nov 10-17)

Earliest Talit & T'filin - 5:11-5:16am
 Sunrise - 6:03-6:09am
 Sof Z'man K' Sh'ma - 8:42-8:46am (7:56-8:00am)
 Sof Z'man T'fila - 9:36-9:38am (9:05-9:08am)
 Chatzot (halachic noon) - 11:23-11:24am
 Mincha Gedola (earliest Mincha) - 11:53-11:54am
 Plag Mincha - 3:36-3:33pm
 Sunset - 4:48-4:44 (4:43-4:39pm)

In the Wolinetz Family Shul
OHEL SHMUEL (entrance floor)
 Shabbat Shiur 3:00pm Mincha 4:00
Kalman Walker
 Motza'ei Shabbat
Rabbi Efraim Sprecher


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This Shabbat is the 50th day (of 355) and the eighth Shabbat (of 51) of 5767

כל אשר תאמר אליך שירה ש'מע בקלה... בראשית כא"ב

Avraham was not the only Jew who was sent to live in Eretz Yisrael. We all are. Because it is part of the definition of being a Jew. We must be kind to others, because it is part of the definition of who and what we are.



Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

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

Kohen - First Aliya - 14 p'sukim - 18:1-14

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

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

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

It was unnaturally hot; that was G-d's doing, to spare Avraham the bother of visitors, He removed the sun from its envelope... However, Avraham is dis-tressed by the absence of visitors, so G-d sends three angels to him in the guise of wayfarers. We have a lesson-within-a- lesson to learn here. To be careful to do for others - especially the ill and elderly - what THEY want, not what WE want, and not what we THINK they want. Also, to realize that there are exceptions to rules. Some people like being fussed about; others don't. For some, taking things easy is therapeutic. For others, action is their medicine.

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

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

SDT "From here we learn that Welcoming Guests is greater than greeting the Divine Presence." Perhaps these two great mitzvot are equal. Why do we say that Hachnasat Orchim is greater. One Chassidic master answers this way: In Kiddush L'vana, we quote R'

Vayeira STATS

4th of the 54 sedras; 4th of 12 in B'reishit
Written on 252 lines in a Sefer Torah, ranks 5th
6 Parshiyot; 4 open, 2 closed
147 p'sukim - ranks 7th (4th in B'reishit)
2085 words - ranks 2nd (first in B'reishit)
7862 letters - ranks 3rd (2nd in B'reishit)
P'sukim above average in length (i.e. number of words and number of letters per pasuk) explain its rise in rankings from p'sukim to words (and letters). Vayeira is actually 2nd largest sedra in the Torah. (Naso, is #1 with no rival - Bamidbar, Pinchas, and R'ei all take up more lines than Vayeira, but those sedras each have many parshiyot, which means a lot of blank space between parshiyot which adds to the number of lines.)

מצוות

none of the 613 mitzvot are in Vayeira, however, as mentioned often, there are Midot and values and other lessons to be learned.

Yishmael who indicates that it would be sufficient to greet the Sh'china once a month. Apparently, once is not necessarily enough for Hachnasat Orchim; one must do that mitzva more often. Hence the assertion that it is truly greater than Kabbalat P'nei HaSh'china. This statement is meant to encourage us to be diligent and generous in our fulfillment of the mitzva of Hachnasat Orchim. It might even explain why one can give up some of his Torah learning time to be hospitable, rather than shun having company as Bitul Torah.

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

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

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

SDT *When G-d dictated "LO T'VASHEIL G'DI BACHALEIV IMO" (don't cook a g'di in its mother's milk) and explained to him the laws of meat in milk, Moshe asked for permission to write Meat & Milk in the Torah (rather than to more obscure expression we have, which needs explanation from the Oral Law). G-d told him to write the specific words he was told to write. Commentaries on the Midrash teach that we received the Torah rather than the angels because they misinterpreted the command about Meat & Milk (when they were Avraham's guests). We must commit ourselves to the package deal of the Written Word and the Oral Law.*

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

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

The three angels each had a single task: One to heal Avraham, one to announce the birth of Yitzchak (both

missions accomplished), the third to destroy S'dom. That angel is now accompanied by R'fael, whose new task is to save Lot and family. Avraham escorts the angels on their way to S'dom.

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

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

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

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

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

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

SDT *The word "and he lingered" is read with the rare trup mark, the shalsholet, which musically emphasizes the reluctance of Lot to (believe what he was told by the angels and) leave. The same word is used in contrast to this behavior of Lot, in describing the haste with which the Children of Israel left Egypt at G-d's command, symbolized by the matza which they hastily baked rather than linger for the dough to rise and produce a "proper" bread demonstrating their faith and confidence in G-d. Interesting, is it not, that Lot is described as baking matzot for the visitors. Rashi's comment: It was Pesach. Which gives us a double association for the contrast between Lot and the people of Israel (Pesach/matza and the unusual word L'HIT'HAH'MEI'AH.*

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

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

2nd longest R'vi'i in the Torah

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

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

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

SDT Avraham returns to the same spot to speak to G-d. From here is derived the idea of having a MAKOM KAVUA, a fixed place for prayer. The Talmud says: "he who fixes himself a place for davening, the G-d of Avraham will help him".

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

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

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

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

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

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

From this point (21:1) to the end of Vayeira, is the Torah reading of both days of Rosh HaShana.

[S> 21:1 (21)] G-d fulfills His promise and Sara becomes pregnant. She bears a son to Avraham in his

advanced age, and he is called Yitzchak. Avraham circumcises Yitzchak at eight days of age, as G-d has commanded.

Avraham's having prayed on behalf of Avimelech for children is juxtaposed to Sara Imeinu conceiving. Our Sage teach us that selflessly praying for others can sometimes result in the same prayers being answered for yourself.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya - 17 p'sukim - 21:5-21

Avraham is 100 yrs. old when Yitzchak is born. Avraham makes a great party upon the occasion of his being weaned.

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

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

And indeed they do, and Hagar subsequently marries Yishmael off to a woman from the land of Egypt.

Both Hagar and Yishmael prayed to G-d when Yishmael was dying. G-d heard "the lad's voice". Rashi says, from here we learn that the strongest prayer offered on behalf of someone who is ill are those of the sick person himself (if he is able to pray on his own behalf). And, of course, others should pray on his behalf as well, regardless of whether the person himself is able to daven. In fact, there are opinions that Bikur Cholim MUST include a prayer for the recovery of the patient (the visitee) in addition to anything else one does, for the mitzva to be considered properly performed.

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

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

Avraham plants an "Eshel" in Be'er Sheva. In addition to being a type of tree, the word ESHEL is considered an acronym of the Hebrew words for Food, Drink, and

Lodgings (or Food, Sleeping, Escort). ESHEL AVRAHAM is the symbol of hospitality for all times.

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya - 24 p'sukim - 22:1-24

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

Although none of Avraham's descendants (we, the Jewish People) can ever be tested in so drastic a way (because we have the experiences of our predecessors to give us strength), we do derive tremendous inspiration from this portion of the Torah. It is part of our Heritage and, even more, part of our Essence. Tests of Faith are relative to the individual. Each of us is challenged in different ways throughout our lives. This is also so for us as a Nation. May we be always guided by deep commitment to Torah and Jewish values.

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

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

Maftir is the final five p'sukim.

It is this last portion of 5 p'sukim that tell us about Rivka's birth. But we also hear that Nachor (Avraham's brother) had 8 sons from his wife Milka and four sons from his concubine R'uma. We are really interested in one son - B'tu'el, father of Rivka (and Lavan). Why tell us the rest? Rabbi Macy Gordon suggests that the Torah is telling us how the "other half" live. Contrast the tough family life of Avraham with his brother's larger family. Nachor had the proverbial house in the suburbs, two cars, membership in the local country club. Avraham had trouble at home, left to places unknown, underwent many trials and tribulations, was childless for a long time, had domestic difficulties, suffered a famine... Avraham had to wait two generations for his 12 tribes. Nachor's came much sooner.

Ah, but look at the spiritual difference. Look at who

Avraham was, and is to us. Now translate the whole comment and apply it to Jewish History vs. the story of many other nations.

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

The sedra shows us the sharp contrast between the kindness and hospitality of Avraham & Sara on the one hand, and the cruel "business is business" and "what's in it for me" nature of S'dom. The haftara is about the widow of a prophet who was facing losing her two children because of her poverty and the twisted state of Israel's society that lost sight of the legacy of Avraham and Sara. The prophet Elisha performs a miracle and the family is spared that plight.

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

THE JERUSALEM INSTITUTE OF JEWISH LAW - Rabbi Emanuel Quint, Dean

Lesson 354 (part four)

Jurisdiction of a Beit Din

Other Marital Cases

In the last lesson, in discussing the jurisdiction of the Beit Din we began a discussion of marital cases, namely slandering the bride. In this lesson we begin with two other marital cases, namely (1) Chalitzta and (2) Mi'un

(1) Chalitzta arises when a husband dies and leaves no issue to perpetuate his name. Under certain circumstances, the legal process of Chalitzta may be performed before a Beit Din to permit the widow to marry someone other than her late husband's brother. The ceremony annuls the obligation to enter into a levirate marriage (Yibum). Chalitzta is explained in the Torah in D'varim 25:5-10. This is the ceremony where the widow loosens the shoe of the brother-in-law and spits before him and declares "My husband's brother refuses to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel?" In regard to Chalitzta, a difference of opinion exists regarding the number of persons required to be present. The teacher of the Mishna in T. Yevamot says the requirement is for three judges who need not be ordained. The Talmud explains the basis of his holding on the verse that states that the matter should be brought "unto the elders" indicating at least two judges. Since a court may not consist of an even number of judges, another judge is added making three in all. There is an opinion in the Talmud that based on verses there should be five judges for Chalitzta cases. The Talmud records that three judges and an additional two judges should be added. The additional persons are added to give notoriety to the event.

(2) Mi'un is the annulment of a marriage by a woman prior

to her obtaining the age of majority if (1) after the death of her father, her mother or her brothers had contracted a marriage for her during her minority with her consent; or (2) if her father married her off while she was still a minor, and then her husband either died or divorced her, and while still a minor she is married off with her consent by either her father or mother or her brothers. According to Torah law only a father can contract a marriage for his minor daughter. Such marriage is binding on both parties as if voluntarily contracted by adults, and as such can be terminated only by death or divorce. By Rabbinic enactment, however, the mother or brothers can contract a marriage for a minor girl after her father's death with her consent; or, after her marriage, if her husband died or divorced her, her father or her brothers may marry her off with her consent. Prior to obtaining her majority, she may, by Rabbinic enactment, perform the ceremony of Mi'un and thereby annul the marriage. There are several views as to how many judges have to be present for her to perform this ceremony. The accepted view is before three judges. If, however, it was performed before only two judges or sometimes even before one person it is valid.

We have now completed the entire scope of the judicial functions that the Beit Din performed. As stated in an earlier lesson, most of the functions enumerated in these lessons are no longer performed by the Beit Din. I am setting them forth to give the reader a chance to read about things that he may not read elsewhere and thus become familiar with other Torah topics.

Non-Judicial Functions:

1. Appraisals and valuations

a. Fruit of Fourth-Year and Second Tithes

In its non-judicial function, the Beit Din deals with appraisal and valuation of property and people under certain circumstances. Its jurisdiction under this function extends over five valuation situations.

The first area of valuation involves fourth-year fruit and second tithes. The Mishna states: "The fruit of fourth year trees and second tithes whose value is not known are redeemed before three." The fruit of the tree of the first three years may not be eaten (Orla). The fruit of the fourth year is to be eaten in Jerusalem or the fruit may be redeemed and the money spent in Jerusalem. The redemption must be before three persons who determine its value. This is the amount of money to be taken to Jerusalem. Regarding the second year tithe the law is as follows: The 49 years between jubilees are divided into seven year cycles of seven years each. On the seventh year of each cycle the land must lie fallow (Sh'mita). During the other six years, the first tithe is given to a Levi. During the first, second, fourth and fifth years of the cycle, the second tithe is either eaten in Jerusalem or it may be redeemed and the money taken to Jerusalem to be spent there on food to be eaten there. During the third and sixth years, the second tithe is given to the poor.

A second valuation arises when a person desires to redeem an object which he had dedicated to the Holy temple. There is a Mishna that states that things dedicated to the Temple

are redeemed before three. A third valuation situation deals with the selling of movable objects to redeem a pledge to the Holy Temple. In the Mishna, Rabbi Yehuda states that one of the three must be a kohen. These laws refer to the situation where one pledges his own value to the Holy Temple and has no money to redeem his pledge. A kohen of the Holy Temple may then collect it out of his movable property and three judges are required to determine the value of the property seized by the priest. A fourth area of valuation involves the appraisal of real estate. This deals with a case where a person has made a pledge to the Holy Temple and now has no money to pay the pledge and no movable property on which the Holy Temple may make a levy. The levy is thus made on the pledgor's real estate.

The fifth and final appraisal case mentioned in the Mishna is the valuation of a person who dedicates his own value to the Holy Temple. In such a case, the person is appraised in the same manner that a slave was appraised in the market. Moreover since many of the laws applicable to real estate apply also to slaves, the person is appraised before nine members of a Beit Din. Rambam in his codes states that if a person says "I pledge my value" or "I pledge that person's value" or "I pledge the value of my hand" or "the value of my foot", then his value or the value of his hand or foot is appraised by ten experts, one of whom must be a kohen.

The subject matter of this lesson is more fully discussed in Vol. 1, Chapter 1 of Jewish Jurisprudence by Emanuel Quint and Neil Hecht. Copies of both volumes can be purchased at local Judaica bookstores. Questions to quint@inter.net.il

TANACH

SPIRITUAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES IN THE BEREISHIT STORIES by Dr. Meir Tamari

Yosef and his Brothers [4]

"Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock in Shechem" (37:12). With this verse we are introduced to the sale of Yosef and his descent into Egypt. There was plenty of pasture near Hevron where Yaakov lived so why did they have to go to Shechem? Bereishit Rabba, basing itself on the dots that appear above the word 'et' in our verse, teaches that they actually went to find themselves, something that required distancing themselves from Yaakov. "On hearing Yosef's dreams and their father's acceptance of the prophecy therein, the brothers felt humiliated and despondent. So they went to Shechem, a city that was the source of spiritual elevation and heightened religiosity as we saw in the case of Shechem and his assumption that he was worthy of joining the Abrahamic family" (Shem MiShmuel). According to Rabbi Hirsch, they saw freedom of the individual as a prerequisite for divine worship. They thought that Yosef was now threatening human freedom in the same way as Nimrod had subjected mankind to his autocratic rule and Eisav represented a philosophy of despotic power. That is why they went to Shechem, that was the site of Yerevam ben Nevat's [anti-tax] rebellion against the autocratic rule of Rechavam ben Shlomo (Melachim Alef 12:3-17).

"The actions of the brothers regarding Yosef's dreams were not

based on cruelty, needless hatred and sibling rivalry. Rather in fact, they were the acts of tzadikim whose names were to be engraved on the Choshen Mishpat that the Kohen HaGadol wore during his Avoda. The sentence that they propounded on Yosef was based on the halachic principle of, "when one wishes to kill you, then forestall him". They sat in judgment as a court and found him guilty as a rodef, who may be killed in order to save another innocent person; the first person who has the opportunity to do so, is so obligated" (Soforno). Other commentators have explained their actions as flowing from seeing Yosef as a rebel against the authority of Yehuda, the destined king, or from their evaluation that he saw himself as a fourth patriarch who would father the 12 Tribes of Israel, or that he simply was planning to disturb the unity of the family. "They thought that Yosef had come to oversee their actions and then again slander them to their father and thus disqualify them" (Ramban).

The brothers declared a herem against anyone who would reveal their actions to Yaakov even though they were only nine instead of the minyan required halachically. So convinced were the brothers of the justice of their opposition to Yosef's dreams that they then associated G-d with the herem; this proves that their actions were pure and holy. Therefore, while they expressed remorse over the pain and suffering that they had caused Yaakov and Yosef (B'reishit 42:21), they never regretted their actions.

Originally, they considered killing him by inciting sheep dogs against him (Bereishit Rabba 84), since according to Sanhedrin (76b) that is not considered direct murder and would be the appropriate punishment for Yosef's slander (Pesachim 118a), or by shooting arrows since tale-bearing is compared to shooting arrows against somebody (Tur). In either case they would not have to shed blood with their own hands; in this they showed that they had no desire to avenge themselves on him but primarily to wean him from a wrong path. After all, somebody who seeks revenge wants to see and enjoy his revenge through directly causing the other person injury (Yalkut Yehda).

According to the Zohar, the idea of killing him was proposed by Shimon and Levi whose anger was the sort that could cause death. Both tribes were dispersed after the conquest of Eretz Yisrael, as foretold in Yaakov's blessing of his sons. Levi's dispersion was in the service of G-d, however, Shimon was dispersed geologically, as evidenced by that tribe's virtual absorption into Yehuda whose territory adjoined theirs (Abarbanel). It is significant that while Moshe's blessing of the tribes, included Levi, there is no mention of Shimon in V'Zot HaBracha. That is because Levi did T'shuva when the rest of Israel sinned with the Golden Calf, whereas Shimon's behavior with the daughters of Moav showed that they did not repent.

Then Reuven suggested that they cast Yosef into a pit. Yosef's including him in his dreams among the tribes, meant that Reuven could do T'shuva for his actions with Bilha. Hashem said: "Before you, nobody ever did T'shuva for their sins. The cities of refuge permit atonement for one causing accidental death. Surely your reward shall be that Betzer in your territory (D'varim 4:43), shall head the list of these cities" (Bereishit Rabba 84:14).

"That pit was empty of water; that is empty of Torah knowledge" (B'reishit Raba 84:15). In every generation there is one who is the authoritative source of that knowledge. Now when they cast off Yosef who was that source of Divine

Wisdom [ben zekunim) they lacked the Torah knowledge that would show them the correct way of conducting themselves in the new reality of their exile" (Tiferet Tzion).

Finally the brothers agreed to Yehuda's idea of selling Yosef; that would rid them of him without actual bloodshed. Actually, both the ideas of Reuven and Yehuda, while constituting human justice would leave the final decision in the hands of Heaven. Death either through the dangers posed by the pit or by those of slavery would show that Hashem agreed with them, however, his miraculous salvation would be a vindication of Yosef.

Still the brothers sinned and the piyut of the 10 Martyrs, read on Tisha B'Av and Yom Kipur is one example of how the sale of Yosef was visited on Israel. The Roman emperor used his knowledge of Torah to claim that the martyrdom was a fulfillment of the verse: "If one should kidnap a person and sell him he is to be put to death" (D'varim 21:16).

"The 20 pieces of silver that the brothers took for the sale of Yosef were equal to five shekalim, and we bring those to a Kohen as pidyon haben to atone for that sin of our fathers" (R' Bachya). Each of the brothers took two pieces that were equivalent to the half shekel of atonement brought by each Jew annually to the Bet Hamikdash.

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VEBBE REBBE

The Orthodox Union – via its website – fields questions of all types in areas of kashrut, Jewish law and values. Some of them are answered by Eretz Hemdah, the Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, headed by Rav Yosef Carmel and Rav Moshe Ehrenreich, founded by HaRav Shaul Yisraeli zt"l, to prepare rabbanim and dayanim to serve the National Religious community in Israel and abroad. Ask the Rabbi is a joint venture of the OU, Yerushalayim Network, Eretz Hemdah... and the Israel Center. The following is a Q&A from Eretz Hemdah...



When I answer the zimun of two who are bentching, when can I resume eating?



The gemara (Berachot 46a) brings a machloket how far birkat hazimun extends. Rav Nachman says it is until "Nevarech" i.e., the introductory portion of the bentching said only when there is a zimun. Rav Sheshet says that it is until "Hazan" i.e., the end of the first b'racha of Birkat HaMazon. Most Rishonim (including Tosafot, ad loc.) understand that the machloket involves one who is answering but not bentching with the zimun, and the question is how long he needs to take part in the zimun.

The Rif, Rambam, and the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 200:2) accept Rav Nachman's opinion. Thus, S'fardic practice is to end the zimun at the end of the zimun addition ("...uvtuvo chayinu"). The Rama (ad loc.) follows the Rosh and others, who accept Rav Sheshet's opinion. Therefore, Ashkenazim should have the mezamen say the entire first b'racha out loud. The original intention of zimun was that one would bentch while the others listen silently and be yotzei with him. However, out of concern that people would not be able to concentrate sufficiently, the practice was adopted to bentch silently along with the mezamen (Shulchan Aruch, ibid. 183:7). Although most people who are mezamen do not recite the whole bentching out loud, they should do so at least for the zimun, which, for Ashkenazim, includes Hazan (Mishna Berura 183:28).

When one is answering zimun but not bentching, he is to listen to the zimun without eating (Tur, Orach Chayim 200). (In theory, he can fulfill his obligation of reciting the first b'racha at that time (see Rama, ibid.), although the practice is that he listens, resumes eating, and recites a normal Birkat HaMazon.) Thus, in an Ashkenazi zimun, one who answers should wait until after Hazan has been recited (hopefully, out loud) by the mezamen. For S'faradim, he can resume eating right after the introductory part of the zimun.

One can inquire whether the need to wait is for the benefit of the one answering or whether it is a basic requirement of the zimun as a whole. Two practical questions likely depend on this chakira (halachic dilemma). One is whether one who ate foods other than bread, and thus does not need to bentch and is not personally obligated in zimun, needs to wait until after Hazan (for Ashkenazim). Do we say that if he breaks his connection with the zimun after its initial stage, it turns out that there was not a proper joining together to constitute a zimun? Another issue is what to do in a joint Ashkenazi-S'faradi zimun. Can the S'faradi follow his own ruling and consider the zimun complete before the beginning of bentching or does that ruin things for his friends who follow the Ashkenazi ruling?

The Rosh (B'rachot 7:12) explains Rav Sheshet's requirement to wait through Hazan as follows: Hazan is not part of the zimun but since the real zimun does not have its own b'racha, it does not appear that there is a zimun if they are not together for the first b'racha of Birkat Hamazone. The Mishna Berura (200:8, without citing a source) explains that the first b'racha is partially connected to the birkat hazimun. According to the latter explanation and probably according to the former, if there is not passive participation throughout the first b'racha, an Ashkenazi should not consider there to have been a clear and complete zimun. Therefore, one who did not eat bread should wait until after Hazan has been recited (see Mishna Berura 197:15). Also, the S'faradi who stopped eating to

answer should wait until after Hazan to ensure that there is a zimun from the perspective of everyone involved. Yalkut Yosef (192:4) says that a S'faradi who leads Ashkenazim in zimun should recite Hazan out loud, and logic should dictate that he would agree in our case as well. However, if bentching along with the zimun, S'faradim should not answer "Amen" to the mezamen's b'racha(ot) (ibid.).

Ask the Rabbi Q&A is part of Hemdat Yamim, the weekly parsha sheet published by Eretz Hemdah. You can read this section or the entire Hemdat Yamim at www.ou.org or www.eretzhemdah.org. And/or you can receive Hemdat Yamim by email weekly, by sending an email to info@eretzhemdah.org with the message: Subscribe/English (for the English version) or Subscribe/Hebrew (for the hebrew version). Please leave the subject blank. Ask the Vebbe Rebbe is partially funded by the Jewish Agency for Israel

[2] Candle by Day

The danger point in imitating G-d is coming to feel like Him.

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We must not be so foolishly realistic as to always deny unreality.

From "A Candle by Day" by Rabbi Shraga Silverstein
A Candle by Day • The Antidote • The World Of Chazal by Rabbi Shraga Silverstein • Now available at 054-209-9200

[3] CHIZUK and IDUD

for Olim & not-yet-Olim respectively

Avraham arrives in Gerar and tells the locals that Sara is his sister. When Avimelech takes her to his palace and is punished, he protests that Avraham is to blame: "You brought upon me and my kingdom this great sin [by not telling us that Sara was your wife]" What did you see that made you do this thing?" Avraham's answer is difficult to understand. "There is but no fear of God in this place and they will kill me because of my wife" (B'reishit 20:11). It sounds like he is saying that the residents of Gerar were fine, upstanding citizens who paid their taxes, coached Little League and said "Have a nice day" at their equivalent of convenience stores. The only thing they lacked was fear of God - and that was enough to justify lying about Sara?

Rav Zalman Sorotzkin, in his Oznayim LaTorah, explains that when Avraham heard the local residents inquiring about his wife he understood that the place lacked fear of God. And if that's the case, they are capable of anything, despite their surface manners and morality. (Unfortunately, Rav Sorotzkin saw this first-hand in Europe. He survived the Holocaust, but lost many members of his very distinguished and learned family.)

The same is true today. We can live in countries that are cultured and polite and decent. But if they are missing that crucial ingredient of Yirat Hashem, then we are in danger, be it physical or spiritual.

Though it's true that Israel isn't yet run by people who necessarily reflect the highest spiritual or ethical values, there is no other country that offers such a long and diverse list of

entire communities that live and breathe the fear of God, whose sole priority is to live in accordance with the highest Torah standards.

Rav Moshe Feinstein used to say that the biggest mistake from Jews made with their children in America was to complain, *Es iz shver tzu zein a Yid* - "It's hard to be a Jew." They should have said the opposite: It is beautiful and joyous to be a Jew.

Likewise, those of us who want to see more Jews living in Eretz Israel have made a terrible mistake in saying: "It's hard to live in Israel, it's a sacrifice." It's not hard, when you consider what it offers, and it is certainly no sacrifice to live in our own land, enjoying a spiritual standard of living that our fathers could only have dreamed of.

Joel Rebibo, Beit El

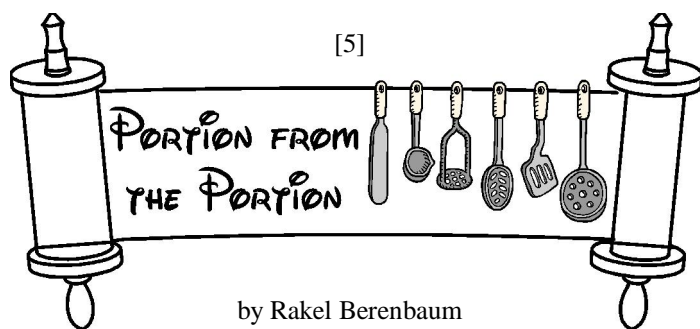
TORAH THOUGHTS as contributed by Aloh Naaleh members for publication in the Orthodox Union's 'Torah Insights', a weekly Torah publication on Parshat HaShavu'a

[4] **Wisdom & Wit**

When R' Chaim of Volozhin built his Yeshiva, he made sure that the accommodations for the students would be ample and pleasing. Some of the people in the village took offense at the idea, as they felt that such accommodations would lead the students to pride. When R' Chaim heard of this complaint, he called the people in the village together and told them: "I was once in a neighboring country and went to the bathhouse on Friday afternoon. As I was getting ready to take off my boots, the bathhouse attendant offered to help me, so that he might earn a few pennies. I allowed him to do so, and in the process he almost took my leg off with my boot. I told him, 'In our community, they are more gentle when they take off one's boot.' He took great umbrage, raised his hands as if to strike me, and shouted at me, 'Are you going to tell me how to do my job, when I'm the best boot remover in the world?'"

"Now," continued R'Chaim, "Even a lowly bathhouse attendant in a forsaken little village can be that proud. Thus I see no reason why you should be afraid that the fact that the Yeshiva students have ample accommodations should be the factor which leads them to pride."

Shmuel Himelstein has written a wonderful series for ArtScroll: Words of Wisdom, Words of Wit; A Touch of Wisdom, A Touch of Wit; and "Wisdom and Wit" — available at your local Jewish bookstore (or should be). Excerpted with the permission of the copyright holder



Avraham brought

"Chem'a", Milk, and the Calf

Seven verses in this week's sedra deal with the actions

taken by Avraham to perform the mitzva of HACHNASAT ORCHIM - taking in guests (18:2-8). "He lifted his eyes", "he saw", "he ran"... We can learn many lessons from all the details enumerated in connection with the execution of this one good deed. These lessons can also be applied to any mitzva performance. Let us look more closely at Avraham's actions.

After convincing the visitors to enter his tent, Avraham runs to Sarah telling her to make rolls for the guests. Avraham had many servants who could have prepared the food, but he especially wanted Sarah to have a hand in the preparation to show endearment for the mitzva (18:6). He didn't only encourage Sarah to get involved, he himself, though old and recuperating from his circumcision, took an active part in the preparations. "Avraham fetched some CHEM'AH, milk, and the calf that he prepared and placed it before his guests" (18:8). He didn't call on his servants, though he did involve Yishmael in order to educate him in the ways of HACHNASAT ORCHIM (7).

The Rabbis learn from Avraham's actions that "MITZVA BO YOTER MI-BISLUCHO", it is preferable when one does the mitzva himself rather than appointing someone else to do it for him. This is even brought down in the TUR (Orach chaim 250) regarding the laws of preparing for Shabbat. It says there, that even if a person has many servants he should do one thing himself to prepare for Shabbat in order to honor the Shabbat. The TUR lists many rabbis who did something to prepare for Shabbat. Rav Chasda cut the vegetables for the meal, Rava and Rav Yosef would prepare the wood, Rabbi Zeira would start the fire, Rav Nachman would prepare the house. None of them felt that it was beneath their stature to do any menial tasks for the mitzva. On the contrary, doing these tasks actually made them more respectable because they were done in order to respect the mitzva. So in order to follow in the path of Avraham, everyone should lend a hand in the mitzva of HACHNASAT ORCHIM and preparing for Shabbat.

Don't worry, I'm not going to tell you to serve milk and meat as the recipe - Avraham didn't serve them together either - first he brought the milky things, then the meat. CHEM'AH is usually translated as curd, it is something that can be eaten alone. Other interpret it to be a kind of leben or yogurt. Rashi says it is cream, R' Aryeh Kaplan translates it as cottage cheese and the Septuagint as butter. In Middle Eastern countries butter was actually eaten alone.

Cottage Cheese Yogurt dip

- 1 cup yogurt
- 1/2 - 1 cup cottage cheese
- 1/2 - 1 cup mayonnaise
- salt & pepper to taste

Ed. note: One cup is approx. 250ml, which is one small container of cottage cheese, for example.

Mix all ingredients.

You can add any flavors you like. There are two variations below - but be adventurous and experiment on your own:

- 1) 1/2 Tbsp dillweed, 1 Tbsp minced onion, 1 tsp garlic powder and dash of soy sauce
- 2) 1/2 Tbsp curry powder, 2-4 Tbsp sesame seeds

[6] Parsha Points to Ponder

VAYEIRA

- 1) Why does the Torah relate the seemingly insignificant fact that Lot's sons-in-law did not believe that S'dom was going to be destroyed? (See 19:14)
- 2) Why does the Torah relate that when G-D remembered Sarah it was AS HE HAD PROMISED (21:1)? Isn't it obvious that G-D was fulfilling his promise to Avraham and Sarah?
- 3) Sacrifices are usually slaughtered first and then put on the altar. Since Avraham was offering Yitzchak as a sacrifice, why didn't Avraham slaughter Yitzchak first and then put him on the altar? (See 22:9)

THESE ARE THE ANSWERS

Ponder the questions first, then read here

- 1) Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky explains that the Torah wanted to contrast Lot and his sons-in-law to teach us an important lesson. Lot, who was not immersed in the immorality of S'dom, was able to believe the angels the moment they informed him of the impending destruction. However, his sons-in-law, who were engrossed in promiscuity, could not see things clearly and did not believe the angels. This brief anecdote teaches that there is a direct correlation between a person's drives and passions and one's level of faith.
- 2) The Ohr HaChayim points to the fact that at the end of the previous chapter Avraham prayed on behalf of Avimelech. Once could have been misled to think that Sarah conceiving a child right after Avraham's prayer occurred based on the principle that one who prays for someone else merits having his own prayers answered. That would diminish the greatness of G-D coming through with his original promise to Avraham and Sarah. Thus, the Torah emphasizes that this was unrelated to the prayer for Avimelech and G-D was actually fulfilling His original promise to them.
- 3) Rav Moshe Feinstein teaches that the ideal practice would be to sacrifice the animal while actually on the altar. However, a lowly animal is unworthy of being placed on the holy altar. The slaughtering of the animal actually infuses the animal with holiness thereby making it worthy of going on the altar. Yitzchak, however, through his willingness to die for G-d, displayed that his body was holy and worthy of being placed directly on the altar where he could then be slaughtered in the most proper way.

Parsha Points to Ponder is prepared by Rabbi Dov Lipman, who teaches at Reishit Yerushalayim, Tiferet, and Machon Maayan in Beit Shemesh and RBS and is the author of "DISCOVER: Answers for Teenagers (and adults) to Questions about the Jewish Faith", just re-published by Feldheim ppp@israelcenter.co.il

[7] Torah from Nature:

"New" mammals

Last week's column mentioned a statement by late 19th century zoologists to the effect that all large animals in the world had already been found. They've been eating their hats throughout the 20th century and into this one. Last week we highlighted the Kouprey; this week, we continue reporting from the internet on "recently" discovered mammals.

A previously unknown monkey species has been found in the mountains of southern Tanzania... believed to be a critically endangered species, with no more than maybe 500 individuals remaining... The highland mangabey, as it is called, lives in the trees and is thought to be closely related to the baboon family... a US research team visiting the Ndundulu Forest Reserve to investigate sightings of the Sanje mangabey, a rare "cousin" of the new species... hunters spoke of seeing a strange animal known locally as the Kipunji. The monkey is brown with a black face, long whiskers, high crest of hair on the tip of its head... a distinctive soft "honk-bark" call. It lives as high as 8,000ft (2,450m) above sea level and has long fur to withstand the cold... There are between 350-400 species of primates, which subdivide into prosimians, monkeys, and apes - which include the single species of human beings. All primates have 5 fingers on each hand and foot, with the thumb in opposition. This order of mammals is also distinguished from others by having short fingernails rather than claws. Primates in general and apes in particular more closely resemble humans than any other type of animals. Characteristics and DNA are used to distinguish one species from another. The classification of animals is in a constant state-of-flux,

and remains an inexact science to this very day.



A new Torah Tidbits column with a Parshat HaShavua insight geared towards the young reader... or their parents and grandparents to read to them.

Avraham Avinu was still recovering from his Brit Mila. But instead of making himself comfortable inside the cool of his tent, he sat outside, in the heat of the day, hoping someone would pass by and be his guest. And someone did come. Do you know who? G-d Himself! He came to visit and see how Avraham was feeling! Imagine - Hashem comes to visit the sick! I never heard of G-d visiting any other sick person, even if they were weak or sick because they had performed a mitzva. But of course Avraham wasn't just anyone.

A visit from G-d is a stupendous honor, even for someone like Avraham. But what does Avraham do? He sees three men approaching his tent and he interrupts G-d's visit and runs out to invite them in! That's pretty amazing, isn't it? To leave the presence of G-d in order to welcome three strangers? But honoring and hosting strangers was Avraham's way of teaching people about G-d, and he was the only one in the world who did it. So when the opportunity presented itself, he didn't hesitate. Not even if it meant leaving G-d. He knew

Hashem would approve.

Of course it turned out that the three strangers were not regular travellers at all. They were three messengers sent by G-d. One came to cure Avraham; one to announce that Sarah would give birth to a son; and one to destroy the evil city of Sedom.

On the way to Sedom, however, something unexpected happened. It's a small thing and if you don't pay careful attention, you might not even notice it. As the messengers were leaving, Hashem suddenly begins to speak. He wants to discuss the problem of Sedom with Avraham! It's as if He wants to ask Avraham's opinion or advice.

G-d doesn't usually tell us what He plans to do, but this time He says.: Shall I hide what I intend to do from Avraham? I love him, for he will command his children and his household to keep G-d's ways and to do righteous deeds and perform justice.

Avraham has performed many mitzvot, and he will perform many more during his lifetime. But that's not the reason G-d loves him so dearly. Even though Avraham himself is a tzadik, if his children are not righteous and just, the Jewish People will not continue to exist. G-d loves Avraham precisely because He knows that Avraham can be depended upon to teach his children how to be righteous and just Jews!

Avraham was an AV HAMON GOYIM - the Father of Many Nations. All the people in the world were his children. And like a good father, he loved and worried about them all - even the idol worshippers. He didn't want to punish bad people; he wanted to teach them how to be good, to love G-d, to do kind deeds and to act justly. And he tried to find good people everywhere, even in the evil city of Sedom. He even bargained with G-d to save Sedom. If there are fifty righteous men in Sedom, will you still destroy the city? You can't do that! How can the Judge of the entire world do something unjust?

Not too many people learned the lessons Avraham tried to teach, but his own children and household - the Jewish People - were good students. For more than four thousand years, Jewish mothers and fathers have continued teaching their children how to walk in G-d's ways. We may not be perfect yet, but we are surely the most righteous and the most just of all the nations in the world. And we are still learning.

The Midrash tells us that because Avraham taught us how to live according to Tzedaka and Mishpat, the Jewish people received two gifts from Hashem - Chessed and Rachamim - Kindness and Mercy. These gifts have become the sign of a Jew. We give more charity than any other nation and we have always been first in line to help the poor and the unfortunate - in all times and all places, If a Jew is cruel and has a hard heart, the rabbis begin to ask if he is really a son of Avraham.

So remember... we always try to be truthful and honest, just and righteous. To honor, love and respect our parents and our family. To be warm, kind and helpful to our friends - and to strangers! To be fair and always try to do the right thing. If that's the way we try to act towards other people, even if G-d doesn't pay us a personal visit or speak to us directly, that's the way He'll act towards us. And we, too can become His partner in this world. Just like our Father Avraham!

[9] **Micro-Ulpan**

MA'ATAFA is an envelope - but you knew that.

MA'ATEFET CHALON is a window envelope - but you figured that one out too.

Okay, how do you say the FLAP of an envelope in Hebrew? Gotchya. cha-FI

[10] **A very old Torah Tidbit**

The following Dvar Torah is from Maayana shel Torah (Ed. note: I heard it from Dr. Paul Slater many years ago - PC) and was the featured Tidbit in the first TT, which pre-dates all 739 issues of TT as we know it today.

Angel Arithmetic

Three angels were sent to Avraham. They had four tasks among them: Heal Avraham from his recent Mila, announce the birth of Yitzchak, save Lot, and destroy Sedom. Why did not G-d send four angels to do his bidding? Chidushei HaRim suggests that Lot's being saved was not originally definite. He was lacking in merit and his being Avraham's nephew might not have been sufficient to save him. But he was also to be the ancestor of Ruth the Moabite. That would give him the merit to be saved, but only if she would be allowed to marry into the Jewish People. The Torah bans a Moabite from entering into K'hal HaShem. Is the ban on males only or does it include females? A future Sanhedrin ruled that female Moabites could marry into the Jewish People and the ban was only on the males who confronted Israel with hostility and refused us food and water. Women generally are modest and remain in the in the background when the males aggressively confront outsiders. To whom do we attribute this modest behavior of the women of the nations of the world? To the mother of a multitude of nations, SARA IMEINU. When the angels asked Avraham where she was, he answered, She is in the tent. This symbolizes a feminine trait of modesty and non-confrontation that allowed a future Sanhedrin to rule that Ruth the Moabite can indeed marry Boaz and become the Mother of Royalty. This got Lot his merit to be saved, and one of the angels that had just fulfilled his task was then sent on to Sedom with the Destroying Angel, to save Avraham's nephew and the great-great-great... grandfather of David HaMelech and the entire Malchut Beit David, until Melech HaMashiach. Lot did not merit an angel being sent to save him, but picked up the merit (and angel) en route, thanks to Sara Imeinu and Ruth.

[11] **Divrei Menachem**

In parshat Vayera we confront the story of the destruction of the evil city of Sodom. Preceding the overthrow of the city with fire and brimstone is a frenetic race against time in which Hashem's angels spur Lot to flee with his family before, "he be swept away."

One of the angels instructs the fleeing family not to turn around at the pain of death. Yet Lot's wife does exactly that - perhaps to see if her two married daughters were following - and is turned into a pillar of salt. At first glance, we see

this as an unfortunate by-product of her tarrying: she failed to escape the salt that rained down on their backs (cp. D'varim 29:22).

Yet, on a deeper level, how do we understand this episode? Firstly, Rashi remarks that Lot and his family were ultimately spared because of Avraham's virtues and not in their own right. It was therefore inappropriate for them to observe the suffering of their former kinsmen. Moreover, Rashbam suggests that by turning round to view the destruction, Lot and his family would have unnecessarily seen the work of angels.

From a different perspective, we see how the wheels of history turn. The Tur points out that had Lot's wife not died, then her two accompanying single daughters would not have consequently conceived from Lot. Nor, then, would the dynasty of King David and Mashiach have been initiated (in the way that it was).

Shabbat Shalom, Menachem Persoff

Towards Better Davening and Torah Reading

The Audible HEI

Sometimes...

Hebrew words with more than one syllable are almost always accented on the last syllable (MILRA) or the next to the last syllable (MIL-EIL). Once in a while, we find a word that is

double MIL-EIL, i.e. accented on neither of the last two syllables, but rather on the second from the last syllable.

And sometimes, we find a word that is only "sort of" like a double MIL-EIL. Vayeira has such a word: ha-O-hela - Avraham rushed TO THE TENT.

The accent, as you can tell from the TROP-mark, is on the second syllable, O. The word is pronounced ha-O-hela. Lower case letters are unaccented; uppercase letters indicate the accented syllable. However, although it sounds like there are 4 syllables altogether, there are really only three. ha is the first one. O is the second one. And since the vowel under the second HEI is a CHATAF-SEGOL, it is a very short vowel and is treated like a SH'VA NA, meaning it is considered to be part of the following syllable, rather than its own. So the third and last syllable of the word is hela. That means that the word is regular MIL-EIL, being accented on the next to the last syllable. But it still sounds to us like a double MIL-EIL word, which is why we've decided to review this topic with its subtleties. Another word in Vayeira that is like ha-O-hela is "to TZO'AR", TZO'ARA. Same thing. A pretend double MIL-EIL.

SHEYIBANEH BEIT HAMIKDASH...

A series of articles on Beit HaMikdash-related topics by Catriel Sugarman intended to increase the knowledge, interest, and anticipation of the reader, thereby hastening the realization of our hopes and prayers for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Beit HaMikdash.

Hugros ben Levi Gives Some Background

After I had readjusted the reels of my recorder, I asked the choirmaster, Hugros ben Levi, to acquaint our readers with the history of the Leviyim. Hugros did not have to be asked twice! When he cleared his throat, for a fleeting moment I thought he was going to sing one of his famous arias, but unfortunately, he did not. Instead, assuming his professorial air, he pontificated, "The Torah assigned the Kehuna, the priesthood, in perpetuity to Aharon and his sons. The other members of the Levitical tribe were assigned other essential tasks associated with the Mishkan. These tasks were delegated to the three Levitical clans: Kehati, Gershoni and Merari. These clans, named after the three sons of Levi, carried out divinely delegated labors during the long trek through the wilderness to Eretz Yisrael. Kehati carried the sacred furnishings of the Mishkan including the Aron, the Golden Table for the Lechem Hapanim, and the Menora. Gershoni conveyed the Mishkan curtains and coverings and Merari transported the "boards of the Mishkan, its bars, its pillars and its sockets ...their pegs and their ropes for all their utensils (Bamidbar 4:29-33). Note that the Torah's ordinances concerning the sacrificial service include neither Levitical singing nor instrumental accompaniment. The brutal truth - and even I sometimes forget this - is that there was no Levitical choir in the Biblical Mishkan." "After the conquest of Eretz Yisrael, the Leviyim were not allotted an 'inheritance' of their own like the other tribes. Instead, Yehoshua assigned them 48 cities scattered throughout the country. The Levites were to serve at local sanctuaries - this was a time of Heter Bamot - and be the teachers of the people ensuring the preservation of what 'researchers' like to call - the 'pure Mosaic faith'. The Levites were to be compensated by being 'given every tithe in Israel as a heritage'. This tithe was roughly a tenth of the produce raised by the other tribes. However, some Levites did not follow their exalted calling and instead made use of the 'open fields' around their cities and became farmers and herdsmen."

"But wait a minute," I ventured to ask Hugros, "What about Pesel Micha?" Hugros sighed mournfully and thought for a moment before he replied. "I agree that the shenanigans that characterized the Sanctuary of Micah (Shoftim 17,18) can hardly be called a sterling example of the 'pure Mosaic faith'. You know that the Tradition views the whole sordid episode as a heinous sin. Nevertheless, you must remember that there was no central ecclesiastical authority in those days capable of enforcing Torah law. Several times, Sefer Shoftim emphasizes, 'In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his eyes.' It was a chaotic period, a time of constant war and severe economic dislocation. The spiritual life of the people suffered accordingly. Don't forget, that during the time of Heter Bamot, some serious abuses had arisen which took generations to eradicate. Moreover, there were always a fair number of rogues and opportunistic vagabonds who preferred life on the road to a settled existence. These Perakim in Shoftim teach us a great deal about the very uncertain status of Leviyim in the period of the Judges. Picture it! Jonathan, a landless young Levite was roaming around the country seeking employment - 'to live wherever he could find a place'. By accident, he stumbled upon 'the house of Micah as he journeyed'. Micha, upon hearing that this young man was an unattached Levite, invited him to minister in his private (and illicit) sanctuary for a substantial salary. Micha rejoiced in his good fortune in finding such a Levite. 'Now I know that the Lord will do me good since I have a Levite for a priest!'

However, Mica's cozy arrangement did not last. Shortly afterward, the migrating tribe of Dan passed through Mica's neighborhood on their way to their new home in northern Eretz Yisrael. With the enthusiastic connivance of Mica's 'priest', the Danites burgled the ritual accoutrements of Mica's sanctuary: the 'Eifod, Terafim and a graven image and a molten image.' Faced with the armed might of the Danites, and the fact that - as emphasized in the beginning of the Perek - 'there was no king in Israel' to enforce justice - Mica was powerless to protest. The 'Kohein' - he was no longer a 'young Levite' - joined the Danites and happily became the 'spiritual leader' of their 'sanctuary' in their new home. Take a look at Baba Batra 109b! This unscrupulous 'Levite turned Kohein' was the grandson of Moshe Rabeinu!" Pausing for a moment, Hugros ben Levi added, "Fortunately, the number of Leviyim who 'went off the rails' were few. The vast majority of Leviyim in those tempestuous times remained faithful to Moreshet Yisrael. When, after the death of Shlomo Hamelech, the upstart Jeroboam ben Nevat destroyed the unity of Am Yisrael, the Leviyim refused to be swept along by the current. They did not accept the religious 'reforms' initiated by the new regime established by the breakaway northern ten tribes. For this reason, Jeroboam, the new king, 'cast out' the Levites and priests from their sacred offices and replaced them with priests 'who were not of the sons of Levi' (I Melachim 12: 31).

Beaming with pride, Hugros ben Levi, opened a Tanach and turned to II Divrei Hayamim 11:14. "'For the Levites left their open land and possession and came to Judah and Jerusalem; for Jeroboam and his sons cast them off, that they should not execute the priest's office unto the Lord.' Even the Levite farmers left their ancestral homesteads in the north! You can bet that they were not compensated by the rebel government! According to the account in Divrei Hayamim, the Levitical migration triggered a further movement of loyal elements who could not stomach Jeroboam's policies. 'And after them out of all the tribes of Israel, such as set their hearts to seek the Lord, the G-d of Israel, came to Jerusalem to sacrifice unto the Lord, the G-d of their fathers.' (ibid 16). That most if not all of them stayed in the southern kingdom is intimated in the next passage, 'And they strengthened the Kingdom of Judah' Later we find Aviya Hamelech of Judah lambasting Jeroboam for driving out 'the priests of the Lord, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites.' The Judean king proudly declared that unlike the newly established schismatic shrines in the north, in the Beit Hamikdash, 'we have priests ministering unto the Lord, and the Levites at their work' (II Divrei Hayamim 13:9,10). The 'Levites, who were the singers - Asaf, Heman and Yedutun and their sons and brothers - arrayed in fine linen, with symbols and lyres and harps - participated in the festivities that surrounded the dedication of Solomon's Temple. While most of Tehillim are attributed to David "sweet singer of Israel" and others to the Levites Asaf, Heman, Yedutun and the Sons of Korach, it is significant that not a single Perek of T'hilim is attributed to a Kohein."

"But Hugros", I asked, "I don't recall any references to an organized Levitical choir in Bayit Rishon until the days of Chezkياهو Hamelech almost 300 years later." Frowning as he sipped his orange juice, Hugros ben Levi gave an almost imperceptible nod. "True...but you have to look at the LARGER picture <to be continued>

Catriel's book in progress: The Temple of Jerusalem, A Pilgrim's Perspective; A Guided Tour through the Temple and the Divine Service

from page 3 PARSHA PIX

- 🕒 On the right is the thermometer with kipa, glasses, and stethoscope, wishing someone who is sick a REFU'A SH'LEIMA. This is one of the lessons we learn from G-d.
- 🕒 Upper-right are the UGOT that Sarah LUSHied - they look like matza because the angels' visit was on Pesach. And Lot made matzot for his visitors too.
- 🕒 Upper-left is one of the three BEN BAKAR that Avraham ran to, in order to prepare the most sumptuous dish for the visitors, tongue in mustard sauce.
- 🕒 In the middle is Braille writing, reminding us of what the angels did to the people of S'dom who demanded of Lot that he send his visitors out to them (blinded them). The message is some- thing the blinded S'domites might have graffitied on Lot's door (when they finally found it). It says: GUEST LOVER.
- 🕒 The skull is the symbol of acid-rain, a good description of that which destroyed S'dom...
- 🕒 Wine? Lot was given wine by his daughters to make him drunk...
- 🕒 The alarm clock set for very early in the morning, is to remind us of the many times the Torah tells us that Avraham got up early, to enthusiastically do G-d's bidding. (Avimelech too.)
- 🕒 The baby in the cradle represents the birth of Yitzchak. Drawing of a metal shield used by many mohalim in their set up for Mila.
- 🕒 Father and son walk hand in hand, VAYEILCHU SH'NEIHEM YACHDAV.
- 🕒 Of course, there is an Davka Akeida graphic and a Shofar that is connected to the story of the Akeida.
- 🕒 Dorothy and Co. (UTZ), the chef (TEVACH, TABACH), the bottle of liquor (BUZ, BOOZE), the sea cow (TACHASH) are for some of Yitzchak's cousins, mentioned at the end of the sedra.
- 🕒 The donkey, ATON, is mentioned in both the sedra and the haftara.
- 🕒 The olive oil is from the haftara.
- 🕒 And there is a column (or pillar) of salt - NaCl one on top of another.

TTRIDDLES...

are Torah Tidbits-style riddles on Parshat HaShavua (sometimes on the calendar). They are found in the hard-copy of TT scattered throughout, usually at the bottom of different columns. In the electronic versions of TT, they are found all together at the end of the ParshaPix-TTriddles section. The best solution set submitted each week (there isn't always a best) wins a double prize a CD from Noam Productions and/or a gift (game, puzzle, book, etc.) from Big Deal.

Last issue's (Lech L'cha) TTriddles:

[1] Also with Chizkiyahu HaMelech

And in the 14th year... this phrase occurs twice in Tanach. With Avra(ha)m, in was in the 14th year of the feuding and subjugation of the four kings and the five kings, that K'dorla-omer and the kings with him waged wars, many of which they won, and then the king of S'dom and his allies fought with the others and Avra(ham) joined the battle... etc. etc. It was in the 14th year of Chizkiyahu's reign that King Sancherev of Ashur attacked all the cities of Judea... more etc. etc. That's it. Kings, wars, 14th year.

[2] POT: this Shabbat morning and Shavuot

POT is Point of Tangency - how is anyone supposed to know that?! Hey, it's a TTriddle, and that's how TTriddles work. But there are acronym dictionaries on the internet, and POT is included. This Shabbat morning refers to Shabbat Parshat Lech L'cha. On that morning and on Shavout morning, when we read Megilat Ruth, we hear the same phrase and episode starter: VAIHI RAAV BAARETZ, and there was a famine in the land... But it also says the same words with Yitzchak? Ah, but he wasn't allowed to leave the land. Avraham did - and some say he was justified, others say he sinned, others say it was acceptable but not "beyond the call of duty". Elimelech left the land and is unanimously condemned for it. So the POT is a famine which led to someone leaving Eretz Yisrael. Put that in your pipe and smoke it - but not the POT.

[3] Avraham needed Mayin Acharomin

Did you notice the spelling mistakes or typos in MAYIM ACHARONIM? For once, they were intentional. Avraham needed a misspelled MAYIM ACHARONIM because of his contact with MELECH S'DOM, which is a misspelling of MELACH S'DOMIT, S'dom salt. A strong salt that was used for food, but one had to be careful to rinse his hands when he finished eating so that he wouldn't rub some of this caustic salt in his eyes inadvertently. This is one of origins of MAYIM ACHARONIM, the rinsing of the hands before Birkat HaMazon.

[4] mentioned before his father

All right, his father is actually mentioned first, by name, but he isn't born yet. In Lech L'cha, we read about Avraham and Sara, Lot and Yishmael, and that G-d tells Avraham that Sarah will have a son from him, which he is to name Yitzchak. But Yitzchak is not born until towards the end of Vayeira. Yet the haftara of Lech L'cha speaks of Yaakov - mentioned before his father is born.

Old NachKwestion business.

ZF mentioned Refu'ah Sh'leima, which was included in the first report of this NK. But he adds Matza Sh'leima, a full matza - as opposed to the P'rusa, the broken piece. There is a dispute as to which one the mitzva should be performed with, so we take a KAZAYIT of each. ZF, a CD is due you. Be in touch.

5767

Latest report on the 5 7 6 7 problem. BYM of PT has represented all the whole numbers from 0 to 150. However, he uses two functions which most other attempted solutions did not use. However, since the statement of the puzzle said that any math symbols are acceptable, why not? So with that introduction, here is 23, which stumped EB in the earlier attempt at this challenge. Square brackets represent "integer value".

$$23 = [\text{sqrt}(5 + 76 \times 7)]$$

$76 \times 7 + 532$, add 5 = 537, square root of 537 is 23.1732605. Drop the fraction and get 23.

This week's TTriddles:

[1] Old sailor, Philistine, TT's uncle

[2] Royal dreamers of the night

[3] testifies to its high fat content