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בס"ד

עלי דשא

ALEI DESHE

Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit"a of Gur

לעילוי נשמת
מרת עקא עדנה
צפורה ע"ה וסרטל
בת משה מנחם הלוי ז"ל

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Finding the Door

וְאֶת הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר פֶּתַח הַבַּיִת הִכּוּ בַּסַּנְוֵרִים מִקָּטֹן וְעַד גָּדוֹל וַיִּלְאוּ לִמְצֹא הַפָּתַח.

And the men who were at the entrance to the house, they struck with blindness, from young to old, and they tried vainly to find the entrance (Bereishis 19:11).

Why did the *malachim* only strike them with blindness? They would soon be dead anyway, together with the whole city, when Sedom was overturned. These wicked individuals who rose up as enemies should have simply been killed. What was the purpose of blinding them instead?

> reshaim are never far from kedushah: the entrance to holiness is always open before them, but they are blind to it.

There is a lesson to be learned here. The Gemara (*Yoma* 38b) says: בא לטמא פותחין לו, בא לטהר מסייעין אותו—*Someone who comes to defile himself they open before him, while someone who comes to purify himself is given assistance*.

The Sefas Emes[1] explains: at the moment that an entrance is opened for a *rasha,* assistance is given to one who seeks to purify himself. Life is full of entranceways and opportunities to attain holiness. Every test and challenge which a person faces is an opportunity offered to enter into holiness. When one person rejects an opportunity and turns to follow his desires, the opportunity remains available to another person to take advantage of.

This is the meaning of what Chazal said in *Chagigah* (15a), "A *tzaddik* merits his share as well as his fellow's share in Gan Eden." Because the opportunities for *kedushah* that were offered to the *rasha* were made available to the *tzaddik* when the *rasha* rejected them.

This pasuk is the first instance where the word פתח, *entrance*, is used in the Torah. Rav Tzadok taught that the first mention in the Torah of any concept represents the root of the concept.

The entrance of the house mentioned here represents the concept that *reshaim* are never far from *kedushah*: the entrance to holiness is always open before them, but they are blind to it. They are so engrossed in pursuit of their evil goals, they fail to recognize that in every test and temptation there stands a doorway to holiness.

זאת חנוכה תשפ"ה מאמר ג

1 5643 *Bo*.

Two Types of Tests

וַיְהִי אַחַר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וְהָאֱלֹקִים נִסָּה אֶת אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּנִי.

And it happened after these things that Hashem tested Avraham, and He said to him, "Avraham," and he replied, "Here I am." (Bereishis 22:1).

The Mishnah in *Avos* (5:3) states that Avraham Avinu was tested with ten trials. The Sefas Emes asks why the Torah uses the word ניסה, *tested*, only in connection with Akeidas Yitzchak. He also notes a difference in wording: The Torah says האלקים ניסה, while the Mishnah uses נתנסה, *was tested*.

The Sefas Emes[2] explains that Avraham experienced two distinct kinds of tests. The first nine arose naturally within the course of his life under Hashem's providence. For example, when famine struck Canaan, Avraham had to descend to Mitzrayim. The famine was not created solely to test him; rather, his response to that hardship revealed his faith. By accepting it without complaint, he demonstrated trust in Hashem's guidance of the world.

Akeidas Yitzchak was different. Hashem's command was given specifically to test Avraham's response, since Avraham was never meant to sacrifice Yitzchak. Therefore the Torah says, "Hashem tested Avraham." By contrast, the earlier trials were challenges to his faith that arose during his life. As the Mishnah describes them, Avraham "was tested."

This insight of the Sefas Emes, explaining the two kinds of trials that Avraham Avinu faced, illuminates the trials that we all face

2 On *Pirkei Avos*.

Cont. on page 3

The Precious Spindle

וַיָּשָׁב אַבְרָהָם אֶל נְעָרָיו וַיָּקֻמוּ וַיֵּלְכוּ יַחְדָּו אֶל בְּאֵר שָׁבַע וַיֵּשֶׁב אַבְרָהָם בִּבְאֵר שָׁבַע.

Avraham returned to his servant-boys and they rose and went together to Be'er Sheva; and Avraham dwelled in Be'er Sheva (Bereishis 22:19).

The Midrash asks why this pasuk does not mention Yitzchak. Where was he? It answers that Avraham sent him to learn Torah from Shem.

The Midrash[5] illustrates this with a *mashal*: A woman became wealthy through the work of her spindle. She declared, "Since this spindle brought me wealth, it will never leave my possession." Similarly, Avraham said, "Everything I have attained came through Torah and mitzvos; therefore, I never want them to depart from my children." Therefore he sent Yitzchak to learn Torah from Shem.

> spiritual greatness requires more than isolated mitzvos or occasional Torah study. It is built through steady, consistent avodah

This raises an obvious question: What was lacking in Avraham Avinu's home? Surely Avraham himself could teach Yitzchak Torah. Why, then, did he send him to study with Shem?

The *Yefeh To'ar* answers that the learning in Shem's yeshiva was more intensive. Avraham Avinu devoted himself to welcoming guests and teaching people to recognize Hashem, while Shem learned Torah in seclusion. His yeshiva therefore offered an environment better suited to concentrated study. Moreover, Shem's yeshiva gathered other young men who wished to immerse themselves in Torah, whereas Avraham's home was filled with people only beginning to explore the foundations of faith.

In short, a yeshiva bachur does not belong at home. He needs to go away to a yeshiva.

The *mashal* of the Midrash contains a deep message. A spindle is an instrument used for spinning wool. Wool that's shorn from a sheep is made up of short fibers that are of limited use. A spindle transforms the short strands of a wool fleece into a long, continuous thread that can be woven into a garment. It gathers many separate small fibers, and joins them into something strong and useful.

This is a metaphor for the work of our life. Each day, we perform mitzvos and good deeds—many requiring only a moment or a small effort. Individually, each act may seem modest. But when performed consistently, day after day, they combine into a substantial body of *avodas Hashem*. Like a spindle, steady *avodah* joins countless small actions into something of great value.

After Avraham withstood the trial of the Akeidah, and Hashem declared, "Now I know that you are G-d-fearing," he recognized the source of his achievement. His profound love and awe of Hashem had been built from countless moments of Torah, mitzvos, and faithful service, all 'spun together' over a lifetime. This was the lesson he especially wanted to convey to Yitzchak.

Shem *ben* Noach was born ten generations before Avraham. He witnessed the world's corruption, destruction, and rebuilding. He also saw that punishment alone did not prevent renewed wickedness—as the generation of the Dispersion once again denied Hashem's kindness and rebelled against Him.

These experiences uniquely prepared Shem to teach Yitzchak that spiritual greatness requires more than isolated mitzvos or occasional Torah study. It is built through steady, consistent *avodah*—many small acts joined together until they elevate a person and draw him close to Hashem.

וירא תשפ"ו מאמר ב

5 *Bereishis Rabbah* 56:11.

Channeling Inspiration

וַיַּשְׁכֵּם אַבְרָהָם בַּבֹּקֶר ... וַיְבַקַּע עֲצֵי עֹלָה וַיָּקָם וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אָמַר לוֹ הָאֱלֹקִים.

Avraham rose early in the morning, ... he split the wood for the olah, and got up and went to the place of which G-d had spoken to him (Bereishis 22:3).

The Noam Elimelech asks why Avraham brought wood for the Akeidah on a three-day journey. Wouldn't it be more practical to obtain wood upon arriving? And if he feared that there might be no trees available nearby, he could have brought uncut wood, and split it for the korban once he reached his destination.

There might be many practical answers to this question. But what's most important is the lesson contained in his answer.

The Noam Elimelech explains that when Hashem commanded Avraham, "Take your son," a fire blazed within him to fulfill Hashem's word. Although this was a great trial, Avraham was eager to carry out Hashem's will. Yet he feared that his eagerness might weaken during the journey, and be extinguished before he reached Har HaMoriah. Therefore, he immediately split the wood for the korban—channeling his inspiration into concrete action. By taking action at once, he ensured that the fire burning within him would not fade.

This teaches an important principle. Inspiration must quickly be translated into action. A resolution alone is not enough. Without a concrete step, inspiration fades, and the resolution is soon forgotten.

We are often deeply moved by a Yom Tov, a speech, or something we read. The key to preserving that inspiration is to act on it immediately.

וירא תשפ"ו מאמר ג

Two Types of Tests

Cont. from page 1

in life. Every hardship or setback in life is also a test of our beliefs and attitudes. If we recognize the providence and kindness of Hashem then we will love Him and trust Him, and not become disheartened. We will not complain about our troubles, or look for someone to blame; instead we will move forward with confidence and acceptance. This is one type of trial.

Occasionally we face an extraordinary challenge which is designed specifically to test the extent of our love of Hashem. The Mishnah concludes: לְהוֹדִיעַ כַּמָּה חִבָּתוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ עָלָיו הַשָּׁלוֹם—*to make known how great was the love of Avraham Avinu.* The purpose of listing all of Avraham Avinu's trials is to teach Klal Yisrael the powerful love of Hashem they inherited from him.

We have the strength to face even the most trying circumstances with *emunah* and *bitachon*. When we do so, Hashem says about us, "עַתָּה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי יְרֵא אֱלֹקִים אַתָּה—*now I know that you are G-d fearing.*"

זאת חנוכה תשפ"ה מאמר ג

The Underlying Sickness

וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו ד' בְּאֵלֹנֵי מַמְרֵא וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח הָאֹהֶל כְּחֹם הַיּוֹם.

Hashem appeared to him in Elonei Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to the tent in the heat of the day (Bereishis 18:1).

Rashi explains that Hashem appeared to Avraham to visit him during his illness.

The Sefas Emes[6] explains that Avraham's illness was the condition described in Shir Hashirim: כִּי חוֹלַת אַהֲבָה אָנִי—*For I am love-sick* (2:5). *Yedid Nefesh* similarly says, נפשי חולת אהבתך—*My soul is sick with love for You.* Avraham's intense longing for closeness to Hashem was itself a kind of spiritual illness. Hashem appeared to heal that longing.

Avraham is called אברהם אוהבי—*Avraham, who loved me* (Yeshayah 41:8). Yet before his bris milah, the *orlah* prevented this love from being fully revealed through his body. That barrier created his חולת אהבה, his love-sickness.

Through the milah and the revelation of the Shechinah, the barrier was removed and Avraham's love could be fully expressed. In this sense, Hashem "visited the sick" by healing Avraham's spiritual love-sickness.

The same applies to every Yid. In the depth of every Yiddishe heart lies a desire for *kedushah* and a longing for closeness to Hashem. At the same time, a person has many other desires and yearnings which obscure these fundamental yearnings.

Chazal explain the pasuk, הִשְׁבַּעְתִּי אֶתְכֶם בְּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלִָם אִם תִּמְצְאוּ אֶת דּוֹדִי מַה תַּגִּידוּ לוֹ שֶׁחוֹלַת אַהֲבָה אָנִי—*I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, what will you tell him? That I am love-sick* (Shir Hashirim 5:8). Shlomo Hamelech was saying "The sickness which I suffer is not a sickness of the stomach, it is not a sickness of the head or of the eyes. From what am I sick? From His love."

We must reflect on the point which Chazal are explaining. The pasuk says *I am love-sick*, stating clearly what the sickness is. Why is it necessary to say that it is not a sickness of the stomach, the head or the eyes?

The idea is that at times a person falls into *aveiros* and attributes his powerful attraction to sin to a physical lack that he sufferers: his stomach is never satisfied, his mind is confused and unsettled, or the desires of his eyes are insatiable. He has physical needs that make him sick with longing. This, he believes, is what draws him so strongly to sin. What he does not realize is that in truth there is a deeper longing in his heart that troubles him. Deep down he longs for a connection to Hashem. He is unaware of what afflicts his heart; that is why he attributes his unsettled feeling to a physical longing.

Every one of the descendants of Avraham Avinu has the power to remove the obstacles that separate his heart from the love of Hashem. Just as Hashem healed the love-sickness of Avraham Avinu, He can heal the heart of every Yid who seeks his love.

וירא תשפ"ה מאמר ג

6 *Likutim d"h b'Rashi*, 5657 *d"h Vayeira.*

Arising Eagerly

וַיַּשְׁכֵּם אַבְרָהָם בַּבֹּקֶר וַיַּחֲבֹשׁ אֶת חֲמ�ֹרוֹ ... וַיָּקָם וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אָמַר לוֹ הָאֱלֹקִים.

Avraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, ... and got up and went to the place of which G-d had spoken to him (Bereishis 22:3).

This pasuk reveals Avraham Avinu's eagerness to fulfill the will of Hashem: he rose eagerly, and saddled his donkey himself.

When Bilam set out to curse Klal Yisrael, he too rose in the morning and saddled his own donkey, as the pasuk says: וַיָּקָם בִּלְעָם בַּבֹּקֶר וַיַּחֲבֹשׁ אֶת אֲתֹנוֹ וַיֵּלֶךְ עִם שָׂרֵי מוֹאָב—*Bilam rose in the morning and saddled his donkey and went with the officers of Moav.*

The Midrash Rabbah[3] states that when Bilam rose early and saddled his donkey, Hashem said to him "*Rasha*, Avraham already preceded you by rising early to sacrifice his son!" The idea is that Bilam's eagerness and energy gave power to his actions. However this could not prevail against Klal Yisrael because they already inherited an eagerness and energy for *avodas Hashem* from Avraham Avinu.

The Chiddushei HaRim[4] explains that this struggle recurs in every generation. The force of *tumah* constantly inspires enthusiasm for evil while the force of holiness constantly inspires an enthusiasm for good. Because Avraham's zeal for good preceded Bilam's zeal for evil, he endowed his descendants with the strength to overcome the yetzer hara with a fiery eagerness to serve Hashem.

וירא תשפ"ה מאמר א

3 Bamidbar 20:12.

4 *Likutei HaRim, Balak.*

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Parshas Vayeria	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbos
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Lakewood	5:38	6:37
Baltimore	5:49	6:48
Chicago	5:27	6:29
North Miami	6:22	7:15
Los Angeles	5:43	6:40

Connecting with a Mitzvah

וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אֲנָשִׁים נִצָּבִים עָלָיו, וַיַּרְא וַיָּרָץ לִקְרָאתָם מִפֶּתַח הָאֹהֶל וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אָרְצָה. וַיֹּאמַר אֲדֹנָי אִם נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אַל נָא תַעֲבֹר מֵעַל עַבְדֶּךָ.

He lifted his eyes and saw, and, behold, three men were standing before him. He saw, and he ran towards them from the entrance of the tent and bowed to the ground. And he said, "My lords, please, if I have found favor in your eyes, please do not pass by your servant (Bereishis 18:2-3).

Rashi offers two interpretations of "*adonai*" in this pasuk. According to the first, it means "my master" and addresses the leader of the three men. According to the second, the word is *kodesh* and refers to Hashem; Avraham was asking Hashem to wait while he welcomed the visitors.

Rashi explains that according to the second interpretation, the events are presented out of sequence. The pasuk first relates that Avraham ran to greet the men and only afterward records his request that Hashem wait, although the request must have come first. Rashi notes that the Torah sometimes presents events in this manner.

The Sefas Emes[7] writes that it is possible to explain that Avraham was addressing Hashem, and at the same time maintain that the pasuk is written in sequence. Building on his words, we may suggest the following approach.

There is a well-known principle: **מצוה בו יותר מבשלוחו**—*it is better to do a mitzvah oneself than through an agent* (*Kiddushin* 41a). The *Shelah Hakadosh*[8] writes that the word **מצוה** is related to the word **צוותא**—companionship. Through the performance of a mitzvah a person becomes a friend and companion of Hashem. It is therefore understandable why it is preferable to perform a mitzvah with one's own action rather than through an agent, as the deed itself creates a relationship with Hashem.

This principle clarifies the sequence of the *pesukim*. When Avraham ran to greet the guests, he was personally performing a mitzvah and therefore remained connected to Hashem; he did not yet need to ask Hashem to wait.

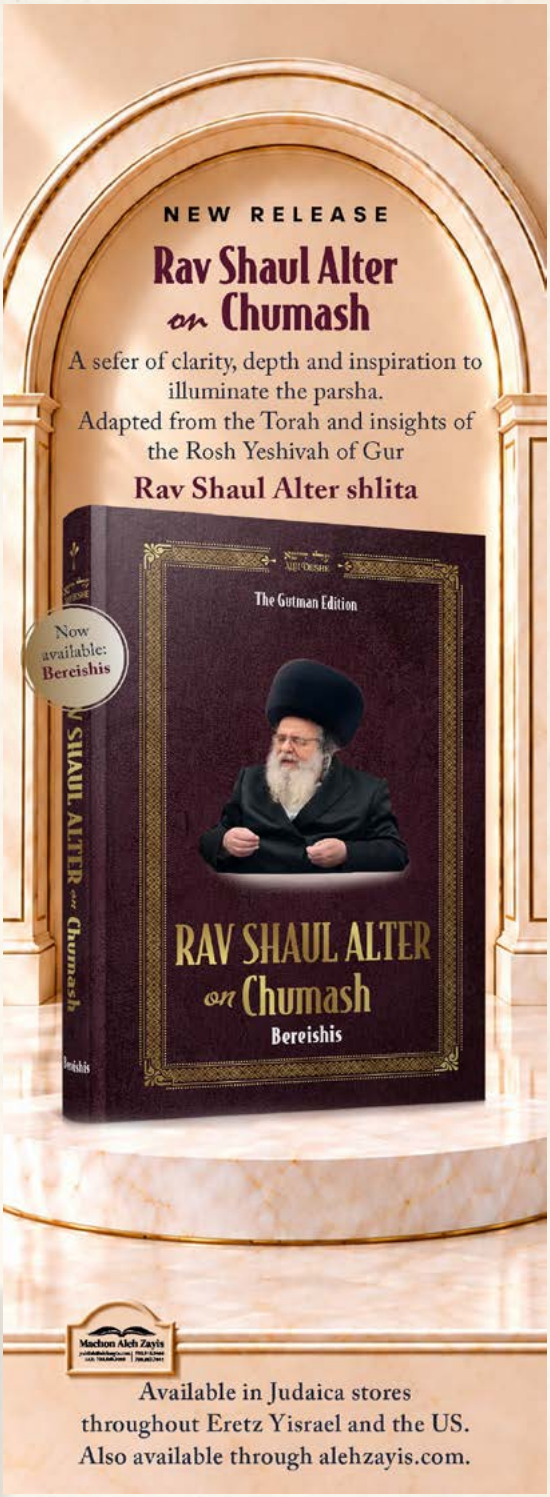
In the next pasuk, however, Avraham says, **יֻקַּח נָא מְעַט מַיִם וְרַחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם**—*Let some water be brought, and wash your feet*. Since he was now arranging part of the mitzvah through an agent, he first asked Hashem to wait while he attended to his guests.

Rashi in *Kiddushin* (41a) explains why it is preferable to do a mitzvah personally rather than through an agent, as follows: **דכי עסיק גופו במצות מקבל שכר טפי**—*when his body is involved in mitzvos, he receives more reward*. This advantage of receiving more reward seems to run counter to the principle that one should not perform mitzvos for the sake of reward.[9]

The Kozhnitzer Maggid[10] explains that "reward" here refers to the mitzvah's power to refine and elevate a person. When one performs a mitzvah personally, its holiness affects not only the soul but the physical body as well, purifying it and uplifting it.

וירא תשפ"ב מאמר א

7 *Likutim*.
8 *Maseches Yoma, Perek Derech Chaim*.
9 *Avos* 1:3.
10 *Beis Yisrael*, *Kiddushin* 41a.



From the Desk of the Rosh Yeshivah

To my dear R'...

You write of your worry over competition that your business now faces. This is indeed a difficult test, one that even great people struggle with.

I suggest beginning with a careful study of *Sha'ar HaBitachon* in *Chovos HaLevovos*, with the goal of internalizing its lessons. When davening for your *parnasah*, also ask for help in strengthening your *bitachon*.

You likely already have a regular *seder* in learning, which is a *segulah* for *parnasah*.

May it be His will that you return with good news.

Shaul

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