Points to Ponder

Vayeira 5782

**וְה֛וּא ישֵׁ֥ב פֶּֽתַח־הָאֹ֖הֶל He was sitting at the door of his tent (18:1) - Rav Dr. Abraham J. Twerski ztl** noted that Avraham highlights a different type of person. Many of us have a hard time concentrating on Tefillah because we are distracted by our own affairs. Avraham was the personality who thinks of Hashem even while being involved in his own affairs and is therefore the man of Chesed. The egocentric person cannot find room for Hashem and certainly not another person. But if one is not at the center of his universe and can look beyond himself, he can see others and have room for Hashem and Chessed.

**וּמַצּ֥וֹת אָפָ֖ה וַיֹּאכֵֽלוּ: He baked Matzos and they ate (19:3) - Rashi** notes that it was Pesach. But why did they bake Matzos before they left Egypt? Can one volunteer a mitzva that has not been commanded as yet? Whose purpose is not known? **Rav Schachter Shlita related in the name of the Beis HaLevi** that Hashem can command a Mitzva before its historical connection. Same can be said here — that Hashem created the Mitzva of eating Matzah and the Zecher L’Nes came afterward.

**וַתַּשְׁקֶ֧יןָ אֶת־אֲבִיהֶ֛ן יַ֖יִן בַּלַּ֣יְלָה ה֑וּא So they plied their father with wine on that night (19:33)** - The term “that night” is peculiar. It should normally be “Balaila HaHu” not “Balailah Hu”. **Rav Dovid Feinstein ztl.** explained that Hu refers to an intentional action by Hashem**. Rashi** explains that Lot’s family didn’t have time to take wine with them into the cave. But Hashem provided them with the wine since he believed in the mission and the future of the daughters’ of Lot to be pure. However, He also brought it about with indignity for Lot to punish him for the lifestyle he had embraced in Sodom.

**צְחֹ֕ק עָ֥שָׂה לִ֖י אֱלֹק֑ים Hashem made it a laughter (20:6)** - How are we to understand the difficulty that our Avos and Imahos had in having children? Why did Avraham and Sarah need to live without one for so many years, only to go through the Yishmael experiences**? Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks ztl.** explained that while there are many answers, one transcends all others. Namely, that we are meant to understand that “*We cherish what we wait for and what we most risk losing.”* Life is full of wonders. The birth of a child is a miracle. Yet, precisely because these things are natural, we take them for granted, forgetting that nature has an architect, and history an author. *Judaism is a sustained discipline in not taking life for granted.* We were the people born in slavery so that we would value freedom. We were the nation always small, so that we would know that strength does not lie in numbers but in the faith that begets courage. Our ancestors walked through the valley of the shadow of death, so that we could never forget the sanctity of life. That is why, Hashem put Abraham and Sarah through these trials – the long wait, the unmet hope, the Akaida – so that neither they nor their descendants would ever take children for granted. Every child is a miracle. Being a parent is the closest we get to God – bringing life into being through an act of love.

**וַיִּשְׁמַ֣ע אֱלֹקים֘ אֶת־ק֣וֹל הַנַּ֒עַר֒ Hashem heard the voice of the lad (21:17) - Rashi** tells us that we learn the lesson that Hashem listens to the prayers of the sick first. **Rav Wolbe ztl.** explained that this is because the sick prays from the depths of his heart and understands that everything is from Hashem.

**וַיַּשְׁכֵּ֨ם אַבְרָהָ֜ם בַּבֹּ֗קֶר  Avraham got up early (22:3)** - but it took 3 days to get to the Akaida. What transpired in the middle**? Rav Meir Shapiro ztl.** quoted the midrash that explains that the Satan was ready to do his worst during these three days. Why did he listen to the angel and not to the Satan? Rav Meir explained that when he saw the Ayil stuck in the thicket, Avraham knew that this angel must speak the truth for in Jewish experience nothing comes easy...continuity requires challenge.

**שְׁבֽוּ־לָכֶ֥ם פֹּה֙ עִם־הַֽחֲמ֔וֹר וַֽאֲנִ֣י וְהַנַּ֔עַר נֵֽלְכָ֖ה עַד־כֹּ֑ה You stay here with the donkey (22:5)** - **Rav Schachter Shlita** was fond of noting the comments of **Rav Soloveitchik ztl**. that there is a difference between Poh and Koh. Poh is what the nations of the world like to live in -- the here and now without hope for destiny. Koh speaks to a place that is beyond.

**Haftara:**

**וְאִשָּׁ֣ה אַחַ֣ת מִנְּשֵׁ֣י בְנֵֽי־הַ֠נְּבִיאִים And a woman from the wives of the Beni Nesiim (Melachim II: 4:1) - Rav Yaakov Kamenetzsky ztl**. wonders why each of these episodes that are described in the Haftara are described in the Neviim? Wouldn’t Kesuvim have been more appropriate insofar as the miracles were for personal individuals as opposed to the masses? Rav Yaakov answers that these Nevuos will be necessary in the future when Eliyahu comes to tell us about the Geulah and there will be challenges to the Nevuah. These type of miracles (performed by Eliyahu and later by Elisha with double Eliyahu’s power) will testify to the veracity of his Nevuah.