

In the tents of Mamre (18:1) – Rashi explains that Mamre was the one who suggested the idea of following through on the Bris. **Daas Zekeinim** wonder what kind of advice Avraham needed. In one of their answers, they suggest that Avraham wasn't sure how to convince the other members of his household to do milah. Mamre told him that if he performs milah first, the members of his household will follow suit. **Rav Eli Zwickler Shlita quoted Rav Henschel Leibowitz ztl.** who notes that one could have presented the opposite argument. After the milah, Avraham was weak and his ability to inspire others would be limited. Why did Mamre advise the opposite and why did Avraham listen? R. Leibowitz notes that we see from here that the best way to teach and inspire is by example.

And Avraham will be a huge nation (18:18) – Hashem's description of Avraham's accolades are all based on future matters that have not taken place as yet. Why would this be a Zechus to him now? The **Nesivos Shalom** explains that Avraham was so humble he did not count his own individuality as significant. Therefore, Hashem noted that it was not Avraham's own status that made him worthy. Rather it was the new style of Avodas Hashem – that of setting precedent for future generations to follow – that made him singularly deserving of Hashem's benevolence.

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household to follow his example, that they will preserve the way of God, to perform righteousness and judgment. (18:19)- What is this "Way of Hashem"? How is Avraham supposed to teach it? **Rav Aharon Lichtenstein ztl.** pointed out that the simplest way of understanding this expression is to interpret "the way of God" as the attempt to imitate God and to behave in the way that He appears to us to behave. He adds that **Rambam** assumes that the "Way of Hashem" is the golden mean. Rav Lichtenstein suggests that Rambam learns this from the contrast of Tzedakka and Mishpat as opposed to Chessed and Mishpat. Rambam is suggesting that a person who strives to exist in a constant state of religious ecstasy, spending his life dancing in the streets with intense fervor, may well experience some lofty and uplifting moments in his Divine service, but he is also likely to end up in less desirable states. A person who does not exercise any control over his spiritual level may reach levels that are not suitable for him – and fall into sin. In order to achieve lofty levels of religious upliftment, a person must first establish an orderly, structured way of life in which he controls his personality traits and characteristics. When a person lives like this, he is able – at the appropriate time and place – elevate himself and achieve a very high level of loving God and cleaving to Him. A life of moderation and control allows one to achieve – in a controlled manner – some special moments of extreme intensity.

And he delayed (19:16) – The **Targum** points out that he delayed. The Trup choice of a Shalshelas also indicates that there was delay on the part of Lot. **Rav Nosson Tzvi Wachtfogel ztl.** points out that one of the lessons for success of Avraham and failure on the part of Lot is hidden here. Avraham moved without delay. Lot took breaks. Thus, although he learned in Avraham's home, he did not embody the message. Hence, although he did engage in Mesiras Nefesh for Chessed, he did not run to do it. Hence, he could never be just like Avraham.

The daughters of Lot (19:31)– They thought that they were doing a Mitzva. Still, **Rashi** tells us that the episode caused embarrassment to Avraham. What did they miss? **Rav Schachter Shlita** explained to us that we cannot know in whose Zechus a safety mechanism happens. One who is smaller does not see the whole picture. That is what happened here too. They felt that it was their Zechus that saved them. But it was not. We need to avoid the Messiah complex and not cut corners – it can lead to disaster.

Hashem made me a laughter, whomever shall hear shall laugh with me (21:6) - Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev explains that the reason Hashem gave children to Avraham and Sarah in their old age was in order to make the effort greater. For there is no comparison between the joy of one who completes a hard fought goal and the same for someone who got it easily. This is why the name “Elokim” is used here instead of the one of Rachamim. It is also the hint in the Possuk of Odeicha --- when I undergo a challenge at the beginning I thank you for MeEis Hashem Hayeisa Zos – I recognize it is Hashem’s doing. It is harder to appreciate something that comes naturally.

And he took his two lads with him and his son Yitzchak (22:3) – Why does the Torah mention the lads first and Yitzchak afterwards? The **Sefer HaKsav V’Hakabbala** explains that Avraham didn’t take Yitzchak first lest the others figure out that they were merely ancillary to the trip. **Rav Shteinman Shlita** adds that they were a necessary component to the departure in that one cannot go on the road without two escorts.

Haftorah: And a woman from the Bnei HaNeviim (Melachim II: 4:1) – Rav Yaakov Kamenetzsky ztl. wondered why these stories in the Haftorah – both of which impact a single family as opposed to the nation as a whole—are included in the Novi at all. After all, only prophesies for the future are supposed to be recorded (see Megillah 14a)—why are these here? Rav Yaakov answered that we learn a valuable lesson here – that a Novi may use supernatural means when necessary in the battle for faith. This does not mean that faith springs from the miracle – quite to the contrary. Faith comes from the Masores. But sometimes, people need the ability to see a sign to return to the Masores based faith. That is the reason these stories are here – to inspire those for whom supernatural faith stories restore faith.