Points to Ponder

Vayeira 5781

**אוּלַ֥י יֵ֛שׁ חֲמִשִּׁ֥ים צַדִּיקִ֖ם Perhaps there are 50 Tzaddikim (18:24)** – Why does Avraham daven for the people of Sodom? Weren’t they sinners? **Rav Dessler ztl.** explained that when one is attached to life, s/he has hope. Midrash adds that Avraham used 3 aspects of prayer to try to achieve his mission: 1) understanding and awareness – that Hashem is the only one who can take care of the situation 2) appeasement –that Hashem grant a Mechila for sin and 3) attachment – that the Tzaddik davens that he is in distress with the situation wherever it is. These elements exist

**וְהִ֖וא בְּעֻ֥לַת בָּֽעַל: She is the wife of a husband (20:3)** – Actually the term Beuls Baal is a term of connection of a sexual nature. **Rav Schachter Shlita** highlighted that in the secular society the marital connection is all based on physical issues. We look to our marriages as more than chance encounters of physical attraction and we require tighter and more lasting bonds in our marriages – hence we call them Kiddushin with Kessef and Shtar etc.

**אַל־יֵרַ֤ע בְּעֵינֶ֨יךָ֙ עַל־הַנַּ֣עַר Do not be upset about the lad (21:12)** – Yishmael is referred to as a Naar which Onkelos explains means the youth. In the rest of the Parsha he translates the word Naar as “Child”. Why the change? **Rav Yakov Kamenetzky ztl.** explained that the difference is a bit of insight into the disagreement between Avraham and Sarah. Avraham maintained that he was Umah like the nations of the world and Yirusha should follow the father. Sarah noted that Avraham was Am Yisrael and status is determined by the mother and Yishmael followed his mother. Hashem sided with Sarah – not for monetary Yirusha necessarily as much as for status as Klal Yisrael. Hashem has repeatedly highlighted this status – the malach told Hagar she should name the child – hence the naar here must mean youth but not your child. Yishmael was Hagar’s.

**בַּֽאֲשֶׁ֥ר הוּא־שָֽׁם:I heard the voice of the Naar where he is (21:17)** – The Gemara (Rosh Hashana 16b) notes that a person is only judged based on where he is – not what he will be. But what do we say about the Ben Sorer U’Moreh who is judged based on what will ultimately happen to him? **Rav Yerucham Levovitz ztl.** explained that when we already see within the person the same Sibah for further damage– we can act now. (Think Moshe and the Mitzree) But merely seeing seeing destruction in the future generations does not give us the right to kill someone now (Think Chizkiyahu’s potential death).

**וּפִיכֹל֙ שַׂר־צְבָא֔וֹ Pichol (21:22)** – It is interesting that Avimelech never seems to speak without Pichol present, why? **Rav Berel Wein Shlita** suggested that Pichol represented the muscle behind the Avimelech diplomacy. Avraham realized that this was the stacked deck in the deal and realized that he had no choice but to accept the terms. However, we too, have a “muscle” – Hashem. And our faith in Him is what will make us victorious in the end.

**וַיַּשְׁכֵּ֨ם אַבְרָהָ֜ם בַּבֹּ֗קֶר** **Avraham got up early in the morning (22:3)** – So he got up early but the trip took 3 days? What took so long? The midrash describes Avraham’s challenges at the Akaida and how the Satan tried to stop Avraham from going each step of the way. Why did Avraham ignore him and not the Malach of the Akaida who successfully stopped Avraham from slaughtering Yitzchak? **Rav Meir Shapiro ztl,** Lubliner Rav explained that when Avraham saw the Ayil in the thicket he knew the Malach was correct. The Ayil represented life – and life is filled with challenges but the challenges make us stronger. When the Malach showed this to him, Avraham understood that this was truth and that it was part of a bigger test.

**כְּכֽוֹכְבֵ֣י הַשָּׁמַ֔יִם וְכַח֕וֹל אֲשֶׁ֖ר עַל־שְׂפַ֣ת הַיָּ֑ם I will make your children like the stars of the Shomayim and the sand on the shore (22:17)** – The **Midrash** suggests that the Beracha of the stars was given to Avraham and the sand to Yitzchak. Why the difference? There is a major difference between stars and sand. Stars illuminate individually, sharing their significance outwardly. Sand sticks together and impacts best, making its impression when it does, in concert with the other sand. Until there was a Yitzchak, Avraham could only make his impact outwardly. He was, after all, the only Jew. Once Yitzchak was born, the Beracha of sticking together was a possibility and would make impact not only externally but within the nation too.

**Haftara: אֵ֣ין לְשִׁפְחָתְךָ֥ כֹל֙ בַּבַּ֔יִת כִּ֖י אִם־אָס֥וּךְ שָֽׁמֶן I have nothing but a drop of oil (Melachim Beis 4:2)** – **Rav Yitzchak Schneerson ztl, Alter Rebbe of Lubavitch**, retold the story of this miracle allegorically. According to the Rebbe, the woman is a metaphor for the Jewish soul, the creditor is the animalistic pat of the soul which wants to overtake the entire human. But the person is not willing to give up totally, it just feels that it has been too worn down. The Novi remains the soul to look for anything it has to hold on to. And the soul finds a bit of oil – a pintele yid that can be used to fill many jugs – Torah and Mitzvos that can sustain it for a lifetime.