



# שמע קולנו

## EVERYDAY EMUNAH: AVRAHAM'S LAST TEST

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In last week's *parsha* we saw Avraham pass the incredible *nisayon* of Akeidas Yitzchak. This week's *parsha* opens with Avraham's dealings with Efron Hachiti to purchase a burial plot for his wife Sarah. Rashi explains how these two stories are connected: when Sarah heard the news that her son Yitzchak was almost slaughtered, her soul flew from her, and she died (Bereishis 23:2). I'd like to make an additional suggestion.

The Gemara records a conversation between the Satan and Hashem. Said the Satan,

רבש"ע, שטתי בכל העולם כולו ולא מצאתי נאמן  
 כעבדך אברהם ... בשעה שלא מצא מקום לקבור את שרה עד  
 שקנה בד' מאות שקל כסף, לא הרהר אחר מדותיך.

"Ribono Shel Olam, I have explored the whole world and have not found anyone as faithful as Avraham... For even when he did not find a place to bury Sarah until he bought [it from Efron] with 400 silver Shekel, he did not question your attributes (Bava Basra 15b)." Why did the Satan choose the transaction with Efron as the epitome example of Avraham's *emunah b'Hashem*? Wouldn't Akeidas Yitzchak be a clearer example? After all, it required him to be willing to slaughter his son! Isn't that a stronger reflection of Avraham's love for Hashem and unwavering commitment to Him?

Similarly difficult is the fact that the Rishonim differ over which tests were the "10 tests" of Avraham Avinu, but all agree that the level of difficulty increased with each test. Why, then, does Rabbeinu Yonah in Pirkei Avos list the Akeidah as *nisayon* number nine and the "wheeling and dealing" with Efron as number ten (Pirkei Avos 5:3)? How did the test with Efron serve as the best example of Avraham's *emunah*, and why was it the hardest one to pass?

The answer is that the day after Yom Kippur is more difficult than Yom Kippur itself. It is more difficult to live as a Jew in the days of Marcheshvan than in the days of Tishrei. When we see a challenge, a great test, our *kochos*

*hanefesh* are harnessed to overcome it. But living through daily life, with its normal trials and tribulations—the ones we don't "write home about"—is the real test of our *shemiras hamitzvos* and maintaining our guard against our *yetzer hara*.

On Yom Kippur, our mission is clear—we rededicate ourselves to doing the *mitzvos* and avoiding the *aveiros*. Come Cheshvan, with no breaks from routine, just normal, everyday life, and it's easy to stumble in our commitment. We can miss a *minyán*, come late to a *chavrusah*, and speak after during Pesukei Dezimrah or Chazaras Hashatz—because "life" just gets in the way.

The Alter of Novardok used to say, "It is easier to die like a Jew than to live like a Jew." While this may sound extreme, it's really just paraphrasing the Rambam in Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah (5:11), which says that when a *ben Torah* scrupulously adheres to both the *mitzvos bein adam lechaveiro* and *bein adam lamakom* in a way that everyone around him praises him, loves him, and find his deeds attractive, he is *mekadeish sheim shamayim*. To him applies the *passuk* "...Avdi atah Yisrael asher bechah espa'er, [Says Hashem,] Yisrael, you are My servant in whom I will be glorified (Yeshayah 49:3)." Earlier in the *perek* the Rambam discussed dying *al kiddush Hashem* (5:4), but the lofty status of "*asher becha espa'er*" applies only here, to one who *lives al kiddush Hashem*.

This was Avraham's final test: to have *emunah* not only at the climactic, dramatic moments like Akeidas Yitzchak, but even in the everyday occurrences. Staying committed during routine life can actually be harder than doing so when faced with major challenges. As we coast through these weeks of Marcheshvan, with the Yamim Nora'im behind us and Chanukah still a while off, it is all too easy to default to "autopilot". Let us be *mechazeik* our *shemiras hamitzvos* in our daily lives and make a true *kiddush Hashem*!

## ETERNAL CANDLES AND HEAVENLY CLOUDS – THE MESSAGE OF SARAH'S TENT

*Shimi Kaufman (21)*

Parshas Chayei Sarah deals mainly with the story of Eliezer, Avraham's faithful servant, and his search to find a suitable wife for Yitzchak. After a series of open miracles, Eliezer

returned from Aram Naharayim with Yitzchak's wife-to-be, Rivkah. The *passuk* describes their meeting:

וַיָּבִיֵאָה יִצְחָק הָאֵהָלָה שָׂרָה אִמּוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת רִבְקָה וַתְּהִי לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה  
וַיֵּאָהֲבָה וַיִּנָּחֵם יִצְחָק אַחֲרֵי אִמּוֹ:

“Yitzchak brought her into the tent of Sarah, his mother, and he married Rivkah. She was his wife, and he loved her. Then Yitzchak was comforted for his mother (Bereishis 24:67).” Rashi on this *passuk* comments that the reason Yitzchak was specifically comforted for his mother after meeting Rivkah was because all of the miracles that occurred in Sarah's tent while she was alive and ceased upon her death returned when Rivkah came into the tent. The Shabbos candles burned throughout the week, the *challah* did not become stale, and a cloud of Hashem's Shechinah hung over the tent. When Yitzchak realized this, he was comforted for his mother, because he understood that Rivkah would run her home with the same *kedushah* as Sarah had.

In particular, however, Rashi uses a very peculiar expression:

וַיָּבִיֵאָה הָאֵהָלָה וְהָרִי הִיא שָׂרָה אִמּוֹ, כְּלוּמַר, וַנְּעִשִׂית דְּוִגְמַת  
שָׂרָה אִמּוֹ.

“He brought her into [Sarah's] tent, and she became Sarah his mother, that is to say, she was, in a sense, like Sarah his mother.” The question is, why would Yitzchak specifically be comforted for his mother after seeing these miracles take place? Even if Rivkah was a wonderful wife, why would that comfort Yitzchak for his mother? In addition, why does Rashi use such an odd Lashon to say “she was his mother”?

The Ramban, in his introduction to Sefer Shemos, draws a comparison between Sefer Bereishis, which documents the lives of our forefathers, and Sefer Shemos, which documents the beginnings of our nation. He explains that Sefer Bereishis is the story of how the Avos brought Hashem's presence into the world, while Sefer Shemos discusses the story of how our nation achieved this same goal on a national level. Therefore, says the Ramban, it is fitting that the book of Shemos should end with Hashem residing in the Mishkan, the culmination of Bnei Yisrael's efforts to emulate their forefathers.

The Shem Mishmuel points out that the Torah presents three miracles that took place in the Mishkan. The first was that of the Ner Hama'aravi, the westernmost candle of the Menorah, which constantly burned. The second was that the Lechem Hapanim, the twelve loaves of bread that were placed on the Shulchan, remained fresh the whole week. The third miracle was that Hashem's Shechinah rested over the Mishkan constantly.

We can now begin to appreciate a remarkable parallel between Sarah Imainu's tent and the Mishkan. The Ner Hamaaravi, the westernmost candle that never burned out, is comparable to the Shabbos candles which stayed lit in Sarah's tent. The Lechem Hapanim, which stayed fresh throughout the week, can be compared to Sarah's *challah*, which did not get stale from Shabbos to Shabbos. And finally, the cloud of the Shechinah that resided inside of the Mishkan can be compared to the cloud of the Shechinah that rested above Sarah Imainu's tent. Thus, as the Ramban said, the Mishkan was truly Bnei Yisrael accomplishing what the Avos did on a communal scale.

With this in mind, we can now answer our question on Rashi. Yitzchak was comforted over the loss of his mother when Rivkah came into the tent because he realized that the mission of Sarah, to bring God's presence into the world, would continue through her children throughout the generations. Knowing this, Rashi's assertion that Rivkah “was Sarah” becomes clear. Rashi used this *lashon* to convey that Yitzchak realized the essence of who Sarah was would continue through Rivkah, which made Rivkah “like Sarah”.

Each and every Jew is a descendant of Sarah and Rivkah. Like the Dor Hamidbar, it is our responsibility to continue the mission of the Avos and Imahos by bringing Hashem's presence into the world through Torah study and Gemilus Chassadim. When we accomplish this, we will truly become “like Sarah” and once again witness the miracles which happened in her merit return to the rebuilt Beis Hamkdash.

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