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Avraham and the Rainbow

Yair Manas

Although he began his journey at the end of parshat Noach, we are introduced to Avraham's character in parshat Lech Lecha. From multiple episodes we see that Avraham deeply cares about the material and spiritual well-being of those in his surroundings. In the beginning of the parshah, Rashi (Bereishit 12:5) quotes a midrash telling us that Avraham and Sarah brought those around them to recognize G-d. Next, Avraham turns down his share of the spoils from the battle of the four kings and the five kings, but he ensures that his partners receive their share. (Bereishit 14:24) A third example occurs when Avraham corrects Avimelech, and tells him to bless G-d *before* blessing others. (Bereishit 14:19-20, Nedarim 32b) Finally, in parshat Vayera, Avraham argues with G-d on behalf of Sodom and Amorah. Avraham has the audacity to negotiate with G-d over the fate of a city whose inhabitants are described in Bereishit 13:13 as "extremely wicked and sinful to G-d."

Avraham's concern for those around him, and especially his arguments on behalf of the people of Sodom, is famously contrasted with what Rabbi Michael Rosensweig calls Noach's "silent reaction to the doomed fate of an entire world." Based on the Torah's

account, Noach makes no attempt to reach out to the people in his generation. In this battle of the extrovert concerned with the fate of humanity, and the introvert concerned with his own survival, who is correct?

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (MiP'nei HaRav pg. 344) explains Noach's shortcoming as follows: Chazal expound that had Noach been as great a tzaddik as Avraham, G-d would surely have entered into a covenant with Noach, like He did with Avraham (Bereishit 15). The Rav explains that Noach's shortcoming was that he did not see the possibility of good in the evil people in his generation. Avraham, on the other hand, was able to see the potential for good in the people of Sodom, even though they were extremely wicked.

Rabbi Soloveitchik suggests that the reason that G-d showed a rainbow to Noach after the flood was to tell Noach that just as a person can see a ray of sun behind each cloud, and even a rainbow can be seen in a somewhat cloudy sky, so Noach should have attempted to seek out the potential goodness in the people of his generation. G-d tells Noach, "You, Noach, did not trouble yourself to look into the depths of the hearts of the people in your generation; I am showing

you a rainbow to teach you to look deeper into each person." Avraham does not need a rainbow to teach him this message.

Concern for wicked neighbours appears in the Talmud as well. In sefer Yechezkel (9:4), G-d tells Yechezkel to draw a letter on the foreheads of the people. A gemara explains (Shabbat 55a) that G-d told the angel Gavriel to make a letter with ink on the foreheads of the righteous, and to use blood to make that letter on the foreheads of the wicked, so that the angels of destruction would know whom to kill. The Attribute of Justice objected to this distinction, and argued that the righteous could have protested against the wicked, so they too should be included with the wicked. G-d answered that He knew that their protest would not have changed the wicked, to which the Attribute of Justice responded, "You know, but the righteous did not know." The righteous should have attempted to influence the wicked in the generation of Yechezkel, and were ultimately punished for their failure to do so.

Certainly, Noach's own spiritual and physical survival takes precedence over his attempts to influence others, and he may be justified in keeping his distance. However, there are ways to impact others without even coming into contact with them. One way to influence those people is to daven for them. Beruriah, wife of Rabbi Meir, corrects her husband and tells him that she should pray for sin to end, and not for the sinners to die. (Berachot 10a) Avraham does not deal directly with Sodom; he davens for them, and asks G-d to spare them. One lesson to learn from the comparison of Noach and Avraham is that introvert or extrovert, one must never entirely give up on those around him.

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שד' נותן לנו בעולם. מעניין לציין שהעיר ירוחם שנמצאת בדרום הארץ נקראת על שם בארה של הגר. הבאר שנמצאת בצומת הכניסה לעיר זאת הייתה נקראת בפי הבדווים "ביר רחמה" באר הרחמים, שכן מים בלב המדבר הם הביטוי האולטימטיבי למידת הרחמים. אותם מים אשר מצילים את הגר וישמעאל.

בשיר השירים (ד: טו) משווה שלמה המלך את האישה לבאר: "מעין גנים, באר מים חיים, ונוזלים מן לבנון". כך נראה גם מהפסוק במשלי (ה: טו) "שתה מים מבורך ונוזלים מתוך בארך". מדוע דווקא האישה נמשלת לבאר? ניתן להסביר כי שלמה המלך בחוכמתו הרבה ראה והבין שהאשה היא מקור השפע והרחמים של הבית, היא המשפיעה על הכוחות הנמצאים בבית.

המדרש (בראשית רבה פב) שואל מדוע רחל נקברת בצד הדרך, בדרך אפרת:

ותקבר בדרך אפרת, מה ראה אבינו יעקב לקבור את רחל בדרך אפרת? אלא צפה יעקב אבינו שהגליות עתידות לעבור שם, לפיכך קברה שם כדי שתהא מבקשת עליהם רחמים. וזה שכתוב: קול ברמה נשמע נהי בכי תמרורים רחל מבכה על בניה.

רחל אמנו, שעברה כל כך הרבה בחייה, שהיא אחת מאמהות האומה, יכולה להתייחס לסבלם של כל בית ישראל, בית שלה. היכולת הזו לבקש רחמים נובעת מעצם אישיותה, מיכולתה להתחבר ל"באר", לאותו מקום של הבריאה, של התורה ושל הרחמים. יהי רצון שגם אנחנו נדע להתחבר למקום זה של "באר מים חיים" ונזכה לשאוב מים בששון ומעייני הישועה.

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בשבת הזו חל יום פטירתה של רחל אמנו-י"א בחשון. כאשר יעקב ורחל נפגשים לראשונה (פרשת ויצא), הדבר קורה ליד הבאר שם פורחת אהבתם. הבאר מופיעה פעמים רבות בסיפורי האבות, הגר מקבלת את הברכה להולדת ישמעאל בבאר (בראשית טז), היא גם נצלת בעזרת באר נוספת בעוד היא תועה במדבר באר שבע (בראשית כא: יט), האבות חופרים בארות, משה פוגש את ציפורה לצד הבאר, מים מסופקים לבני ישראל במדבר באמצעות באר מרים, וכפי שפתחנו, שם נפגשים יעקב ורחל.

ניתן להסביר בפשטות שמקור המים בעת העתיקה היה מקום מפגש קבוע לאנשים רבים, אך אולי ננסה למצוא מסר נוסף המסתתר במשמעות הבאר. הגמרא במסכת ברכות (נו:) מספרת על אדם שרואה באר בחלום, ושואלת מה פרוש חלום זה. הגמרא מביאה שלוש תשובות שונות. רבי חנינא אומר כי הרואה באר בחלום רואה שלום, רבי נתן אומר: מצא תורה, רבא אומר: חיים ממש, כלומר אריכות ימים. שלוש הביטויים הנ"ל מבטאים מקורות של שפע וברכה.

הגמרא בתלמוד הירושלמי מביאה מימרא של ר' עקיבא:

דרש עקיבא ... וזכור את בוראך (קהלת י"ב): בארך. בורך. בוראך. בארך- ממקום שבאותה.

הבאר מסמלת את המקום ממנו נבראו בני האדם, המקור של השפע, מהו אותו מקור זה? אנו לומדים במקומות רבים שד' בורא את האדם במידת הרחמים, השפע שניתן לנו מאת הקב"ה נובע ממקור רחמיו של הקב"ה, הבאר אם כן מסמלת מציאות של רחמים, גם מים חיים אשר מסמלים את התורה מסמלים גם את הרחמים, את השפע

Hitoriri: Jewish Spirituality Value Life!

Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

A midrash elaborates upon Avraham's journey from Charan to Eretz Israel, then known as Canaan:

As Avraham was walking in Aram Naharaim and Aram Nachor, he saw people eating, drinking and celebrating recklessly. He said, "I hope my share won't be in this land."

When he arrived at Tzur's mountains (the modern boundary between Israel and Lebanon), he saw them busy with weeding at the time to weed and hoeing at the time to hoe. He said, "I hope my share will be in this land." G-d said to him: "To your offspring I will give this land" (Bereishit Rabbah 39:8)

Why was Avraham so impressed by the sight of labour? Why wouldn't Avraham choose a richer land, where people could indulge in eating, dancing and celebrating? Even if Avraham didn't like the celebrations of the non-Jews, he could have chosen such a land, and taught his family to use its resources for Torah and mitzvot!

It seems clear that Avraham did not only oppose 'eating, drinking and celebrating'; he positively appreciated labour and hard work. A reason might be found in an explanation given by Rashi to a mishnah in Sanhedrin (3:3). The mishnah states that a man who engages in 'cube games' (i.e. gambling) and is doing nothing else to support himself, is unfit to testify in court. Rashi (Eruvin 82a) explains, "They are not engaged in settling the world, so they are not familiar with the labour and sorrows of men, and therefore they do not spare their friends from losing money." According to Rashi, a man who is not working for his living does not appreciate his own wealth, or that of his friend.

Avraham wanted his sons to grow up in a place where life was valued. The labour and the work we put forth to sustain our life should remind us of the importance of our lives, and the precious nature of each minute.

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613 Mitzvot: #212 Awe for our Parents Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

The Torah's thirty-third mitzvah requires us to honour our parents, but the 212th mitzvah adds a dimension, instructing, "A man shall have awe of his mother and father." (Vayikra 19:3) Thus there are two mitzvot: Awe and Honour. "Awe" refers to displays of respect; for example, we don't sit in our parents' seats and we don't contradict them. "Honour" refers to actions which actively provide honour, such as providing meals or dressing them.

The mandate to act with respect toward one's parents applies to all

situations; even a *mamzer* is obligated in this mitzvah. However, some suggest that this obligation exists only after the parent has repented. (Yevamot 22b; Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 240:18)

It is worth noting that a parent is empowered to forgive his honour; for example, a mother may permit her child to sit in her seat. However, a mother is not entitled to permit her child to cause her pain or public disgrace. (Minchat Chinuch 212:6)

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Torah in Translation
Y'hi Ratzon
during Shofar
Rabbi Chaim Elazar Spira

Minchat Elazar 1:75

Translated by R' Mordechai Torczyner

Regarding the Derech Chaim's statement that one should not recite the *y'hi ratzon* printed in siddurim and machzorim between the first sets of shofar blasts: He referenced Orach Chaim 592, but no prohibition is found there. Just the opposite, the Rama there said that prayers are not an interruption between shofar blasts, only between the berachah and the shofar blast. For this, then, which is between the sets of blasts, one may interrupt with *y'hi ratzon*, which is related to the shofar blasts. It is only between the berachah and the start of the shofar blasts that it would constitute an interruption. It appears that he meant to reference the Taz (592:1), who said that one should not interrupt until after the blasts blown during the amidah...

However, in the *y'hi ratzon* one prays that the blasts should be accepted and desired. The sages said that the first blasts are to confuse the Satan, as the Taz himself wrote (592:2), and so one needs to pray that they should be desirable in confusing the Satan.

This is certainly true given that the Ari z"l wrote that one should confess his sins verbally, albeit silently, between the blasts! And it will certainly be no worse than one's own prayers in musaf, and the added poems which do not constitute an interruption for this issue...

However, regarding the text of the *y'hi ratzon* paragraphs between the blasts, my father's practice is not to say them for a separate reason. There is concern for mixture of foreign ideas in the meditations upon the Names, which are not from the Ari z"l. I would be afraid to open my mouth regarding such issues, especially as these paragraphs have been printed and published in ancient as well as new siddurim. On the other hand, in my humble opinion, the obligation is upon each individual to publicize and inform people of this, to keep people from reciting them and meditating upon them out of concern for these foreign ideas, Gd forbid...

It is recorded in the *y'hi ratzon* after tekiah-shevarim-teruah-tekiah, "And Yeshua the internal celestial officer, and the celestial officer Mt"t." We have not seen this name for an "internal celestial officer" angel anywhere; only Mt"t is the internal celestial officer... This name Yeshua is like the name used by those who promote that known idolatry, Gd

Rabbi Elazar Spira was born in the Austro-Hungarian town of Strzyzow, into the rabbinic family which led the Munkaczer chasidim, in December, 1868. He received the name "Chaim" during a grave illness at the age of three, on the instruction of his father's mentor, Rabbi Chaim of Sanz.

Rabbi Spira was a child prodigy, writing his first work of Jewish law at the age of 11. He became the head of the beit din of Munkacz in 1903, serving alongside his father, who was the Munkaczer Rebbe. When his father passed away in 1913, Rabbi Chaim Elazar Spira became the new Munkaczer Rebbe. He was also known as "Minchas Elazar", the title of his major work on Jewish law.

The charismatic leadership of Rabbi Spira spurred the growth of the Munkaczer chasidim. People came from near and far to seek his counsel and his blessing, and he organized a network of tzedakah institutions to take care of social needs. His yeshiva, Darchei Teshuvah, attracted students from all over Europe. International leaders, including Czech president Edvard Benes and Holland's Queen Wilhelmina, visited the sage. By the time of his passing, in May of 1937, more than half of Munkacz was Jewish. When Rabbi Spira's daughter Frima got married, Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia opened their borders to permit visitors to attend the wedding without visa; more than 20,000 guests attended.

Rabbi Spira founded a tzedakah which helped support Jews living in then-Palestine, and he established a Jerusalem neighbourhood, Batei Munkacz. Rabbi Spira himself visited Israel in 1930. However, Rabbi Spira was a strong opponent of Zionism, contending that Jews should not seek to establish a self-governing state until the miraculous arrival of Mashiach. He was also militantly opposed to the formation of Jewish umbrella organizations, including Agudath Israel, contending that Jews should focus on their personal relationships with HaShem.

Broad scholarship and prolific writing have kept Rabbi Spira's influence alive in the decades since his passing; he published more than twenty books on Jewish law, chumash, chassidut, liturgy and Jewish philosophy.

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save us. This mistake was allowed due to carelessness... and from there this mistake was drawn into other siddurim, since no one pays attention to these matters which are the world's secrets...

This Week in
Israeli History
Cheshvan 16, 1949
On Wings of Eagles
Adam Frieberg

Thursday is the 16th of Cheshvan

Between June 1949 and September 1950, 42,862 Yemenite Jews were brought to the newly established State of Israel. Families and individuals were airlifted on British and American transport planes over the course of approximately 380 flights from Aden, a port city on the eastern approach to the Red Sea. The operation was kept secret out of fear that other Muslim nations would object, but it was publicly announced on the 16th of Cheshvan.

The origin of the ancient Jewish communities in Yemen is a highly contested topic, but everyone agrees that they have been there for more than a millennium. One theory suggests that Jews immigrated there after they were exiled from Israel with the destruction of the first Beit haMikdash. Over the centuries, the Jews spread throughout the country; by 1949, 80 percent were living in small towns rather than urban centres. The situation for Yemen's Jews became extremely hostile following the announcement of the 1947 UN Partition Plan; Muslim rioters killed 82 Jews and destroyed many homes. This was part of the impetus for the mass emigration.

The Israeli government set up an encampment, entitled Geulah ["redemption"], next to Aden. In order to reach this city, thousands of Jews travelled by foot and on donkeys, vulnerable to robbers as well as hostile local populations. This wasn't the first time that Jews had left Yemen for Israel; the first significant departure of Jews from Yemen was in 1862. However, this undertaking, officially called Operation on Wings of Eagles, (taken from Shemot 19:4) and also commonly called Operation Magic Carpet, was the first mass exodus.

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Who is the prophet of our haftorah?

Yeshayah (Isaiah) was a prophet in the period leading up to the exile of the ten northern tribes of Yisrael by the Assyrians. He lived in the southern kingdom of Yehudah, and he prophesied during the reigns of Kings Uzziah, Yotam, Achaz and Chizkiyahu. According to the Talmud (Sotah 10a), he was a descendant of Yehudah and Tamar.

As the Talmud (Bava Batra 15a) informs us, the book of Yeshayah was compiled by King Chizkiyahu and associates of his. The prophecies of Yeshayah may be classified in two categories, Rebuke and Redemption; the former dominates the early chapters of the book, while the latter occupies the latter portion. The split is not clean, though; portions of the former include redemption, and portions of the latter include rebuke.

What is the message of our haftorah?

Our haftorah speaks about the election of the Jewish People. The people in exile are questioning this election. They doubt; maybe G-d has forgotten us, and has distanced us from him. To that Yeshayah answers sharply: Don't they know that G-d is not one to forget or to become tired? When the day of redemption comes, Yisrael's enemies will be defeated and lost, and the

Jewish people will be free to rejoice and thank Hashem. Yeshayah comforts and assures the people that they are still 'Yaakov whom I have chosen'.

What is the connection between our haftorah and the parshah?

The concept of the Jewish nation as an elected nation begins with Avraham in our parshah, as he is separated from his family by the command, "Lech Lecha – leave your country, your homeland and your family."

Again and again throughout his life, Avraham is required to prove his love and faith towards Hashem. Chazal tell us that Avraham was tried no less than ten times! According to the Rambam (Commentary to the Mishnah, Avot 5:3) the first test was Lech Lecha, and the last was the Akeidah.

Remaining strong in all of these tests, Avraham earned the title 'Ohavi', 'My lover' – the one who loved Me. This title is bestowed upon him by Yeshayah in our haftorah. In a world full of idol worshippers, Avraham achieved knowledge of G-d. The haftorah does not end with this note, though. In the same verse in which Avraham is called 'My lover', the Jews are called 'Avdi', 'My servant'.

Avraham is chosen not only because of his own will to recognize Hashem, but

also because of the divine plan to unite the world under G-d, as 'avdi'. Maharal (Netzach Yisrael 11) elaborates on this point, asking why the Torah explains to us that Noach was chosen because of his deeds, while regarding Avraham our parshah begins with the selection itself, without any explanation as to why Avraham was chosen. He answers that Noach was chosen as an individual, while Avraham was chosen to begin building a nation. Selection of an individual can depend upon his deeds and misdeeds, but G-d's considerations when choosing a nation should focus on the potential for the future. Hashem chose Avraham for what Avraham and his descendants were capable of accomplishing, and not for their previous accomplishments.

It seems that this concept of the Jewish nation as a servant is our haftorah's fundamental message. The people are worried because of their exile and their enemy's success. Yeshayah's answer is: Don't look at things as they appear, for Israel's election does not depend on the actual, but on the potential. Because our election is rooted in the future and not in the past or present, the fear that G-d will leave us has no basis; our goals still lie ahead.

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Highlights for October 27 - November 3 / 11-17 Cheshvan

Shabbat, October 27

7:45 AM R' Baruch Weintraub, Reasons for Mitzvot and the Parshah, Or Chaim **not this week**

10:20 AM R' Baruch Weintraub, Parshah, Clanton Park

11:30 AM R' Baruch Weintraub, The Stranger, Or Chaim

4:50 PM Hillel Horovitz, "G-d and Human Testing", BAYT Hebrew

5:05 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Daf Yomi: Shabbat 24, BAYT

5:20 PM Adam Frieberg, Lech Lecha, Shaarei Tefillah

After minchah R' Mordechai Torczyner, Gemara Avodah Zarah, BAYT **not this week**

Sunday, October 28

8:45 AM Breakfast and Beit Midrash, R' Baruch

Weintraub, When Human and Divine Ethics Clash, FHJC

9:15 AM Hillel Horovitz, Parshah, Zichron Yisroel, Hebrew (Shacharit 8:30 AM)

After maariv R' Baruch Weintraub, Contemporary Halachic Questions in Israel, Hebrew, Clanton Park, **men**

8:30 PM R' Baruch Weintraub, Contemporary Halachic Questions in Israel, Hebrew, 4 Tillingham Keep, **mixed**

Monday, October 29

8-10 PM Monday night Beit Midrash at Bnai Torah

8 PM Hillel Horovitz, Shemuel II, Shemuel & Batsheva, Bnai Torah

8 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Medical Halachah with CME: Patient Capacity for Consent, Shaarei Shomayim

8-10 PM Monday night Beit Midrash at Clanton Park

Tuesday, October 30

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Tzefaniah 2: Global Devastation, Shaarei Shomayim, with *Mekorot*

7:30 PM Hillel Horovitz, King David: Shemuel Bet, KST

8 PM Adam Frieberg, Yiftach's Daughter: Human Sacrifice?, Shaarei Tefillah

8:30 PM R' Baruch Weintraub, Rambam's Laws of Kings, Shomrai Shabbos, **men**

8:45 PM R' Ezra Goldschmiedt, Jewish Clothing Controversies, Week 1, BAYT

Wednesday, October 31

10 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Supernatural/Superstition, Week 3, BEBY, with *Melton*

12:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Business Ethics Lunch & Learn Week 2: Suing in Secular Court, Zeifmans

8:30 PM Roving Beit Midrash: R' Baruch Weintraub, Women in the Synagogue, TCS

Next Roving Beit Midrash: Shaarei Shomayim, Nov. 14, R' Mordechai Torczyner, History of Modern Zionism

Thursday, November 1

8:30 PM R' Baruch Weintraub, Chabura: Sotah, Clanton Park