



Do It Yourself

Rabbi Sandy Shulkes

The Talmud states (*Bava Metziah* 86b) that everything that Avraham personally prepared for the angels, Hashem personally prepared for the Israelites in the wilderness. In contrast, everything that Avraham prepared for the Angels through an agent or third party, Hashem also prepared for the Israelites through an agent or third party. For example, just as Avraham stood to attend to the virtual needs of the three Arab angels, so too Hashem Himself stood the "clouds of glory" around the Israelites' encampments throughout their wanderings in the wilderness. Similarly, just as Avraham personally brought water to the angels to drink, so too, Hashem personally ensured that the Israelites had water in the desert.

The Talmud goes on to explain that one is rewarded more abundantly when the *Mitzvah* is carried out by the person himself, instead of through an agent. The Torah tells us that Avraham asked his son Yishma'el to assist with the food preparations for the three angels. Therefore, we have to ask ourselves, why would Avraham delegate any responsibilities to Yishma'el instead of doing these acts of *Chessed* himself? As mentioned above, the Talmudic text informed us that it is always better if one personally acts. As we ought to assume that Avraham was not being lazy by delegating these tasks to Yishma'el, he must have had an ulterior motive for his actions. Apparently, Avraham wanted to educate Yishma'el in the practice of extending hospitality to guests. Accordingly, how can we even have questioned Avraham's actions when the reason he delegated the *Mitzvah* to Yishma'el was to educate him in the practice *Chessed*?

Really, the reason we question Avraham is because the best way to educate your children is to do it yourself. "Teaching by example" is a far superior form of education in comparison to verbal instruction. Yishma'el could have learned the ways of Avraham and how to do *Chessed* by simply observing the way Avraham treated the Angels, but Avraham clearly knew that this was not the best way for Yishma'el to learn.

We find a similar concept in *Parashat Emor* with the commandment to the *Kohanim* to maintain an elevated level of purity. When Moshe is told to speak to the *Kohanim*, it states both "*emor*" and "*ve'amarta*" - "speak to *Bnei Yisrael* and say," which is clearly redundant. Rashi picks up on this question and quotes the *Gemara* in *Yevamot* 114a that the *Kohanim* are being commanded to also "*Le'Hazir Gedolim Al Ha'Ketanim*" - "to caution adults regarding their children." Rabbi Zweig explains that in this scenario, implicit within the commandment to do their job, the *Kohanim* are also commanded to focus on educating their children. The method in which adult *Kohanim* teach their children is through acting without any imposition. This form of teaching will go farther than any words a parent can offer.

It is easy to be complacent. But to be strict with others regarding their motives and actions, we have to look inside ourselves and ask the question: "Am I doing everything I can to show others my true self."

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The Flame of Our Ancestors

"Hold onto instruction do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life"

-Proverbs 4:13

Tefillah Gems

Eytan Merkin '18

The Talmud in *Berachos* 26B tells us that the three daily prayers were formulated by the *Avot*. Avraham established *Shacharis*, *Yitzchak* established *Minchah*, and *Yaakov* established *Maariv*. It is unlikely that while we pray three times a day, each of our Patriarchs prayed just once a day. Rabbi Abraham Twerski suggests that our Patriarchs did not literally pray only at *Shacharis*, *Minchah*, or *Maariv*; rather, the character of their prayers was embodied by the morning, afternoon, and evening.

Avraham was born into a world of spiritual darkness. At a young age, he realized the folly of idolatry and found the one true God. Avraham's journey was one of a breakthrough from spiritual darkness to the light of truth. Therefore, his prayers were embodied by *Shacharis*, the prayer of dawn.

*Yitzchak*, by contrast, was born into the light of spirituality. His life was relatively free of pain and distress, and therefore could be compared the steady brightness of the sun. Therefore, his prayers were embodied by *Minchah*, the afternoon prayer.

*Yaakov*'s life began with comfort in the home of his parents, but slowly progressed into the darkness of pain and suffering. Therefore, his prayers were embodied by *Maariv*, the evening prayer.

When we pray *Shacharis*, *Mincha*, and *Maariv*, we should reflect that the character of these prayers correspond to various times in our lives. Regardless of the circumstances, we should always pray to God for His help and be grateful for the kindness He has shown us.

## The Righteous Shawn Partovi '19

In *Parashat Va'Yera* "When God destroyed the cities of the plain, God remembered Avraham and sent Lot amidst the upheaval" (*Bereshit* 19:29). A *Midrash* on this *Passuk* comments, "Even when the Holy, Blessed not is angry, he still has empathy." The *Midrash* then immediately continues, "On Shabbat one may save a Torah case and a Torah or a Tefillin case with tefillin from a fire." This teaches us that *Tzadikim* are fortunate and so are those who cling to them. Rebbe Nachman says it is very beneficial to have a connection to a true *Tzadik*. One who is connected to a genuine *Tzadik* can stay close to him and stay alive. Since he is constantly connected to a *Tzadik*, he will cast off all wickedness.

Despite the fact that Lot gave away his close connection with Avraham Avinu for the corruption of Sodom, the lessons he learned from Avraham gave him surviving connection to the *Tzadik*. Even though, there was a risk involved in the "crime of hospitality" in Sodom, Lot still accepted guests. In addition, when Lot's guests talked wickedly about the people of Sodom, he attempted to defend the people.

We, as human beings, despite our wickedness, are greedy and actively seek a connection with genuine *Tzadikim* to remedy or dampen our sins. We can hope and pray that our grasp will always be firm as was Lot's. His "grasp" of a true *Tzadik* ultimately had a direct bearing on Mashiach: As a result of being saved, Lot began the family tree that eventually produced David Hamelech whose descendants include *Mashiach*.

One might ask "What is grasping?" This is Hashem's way of getting our attention. Hashem does not want any of his creations to suffer, so he grasps and shakes us to wake us up as he did with Lot.

We learn from this that the purpose of disasters is not for survivors to call the perished wicked and say "they received what they deserved." It is a wake up call to us to check our own misbehavior. The Chafetz Chaim once said about an earthquake, "I don't know what it means, but I do know that God is telling us: Children -- return to me."

## Being a Good Host

In this week's *Parasha* we are introduced to a key *Mitzvah*, the *Mitzvah* of *Hachnasat Orchim*, welcoming guests into our homes. As the *Pasuk* says, "Looking up, he saw three men standing near him. As soon as he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them and, bowing to the ground" (*Bereshit* 18:2). We also learn from this *Pasuk* that Avraham was avid about this particular *Mitzvah* since he ran to greet them even though he was in much pain from his *Brit Milah* just three days earlier. Rashi first clarifies that these men were actually angels on a mission. Next, Rashi raises a question on this *Pasuk*. He asks why Hashem sent these angels to Avraham, could he not just send one angel to communicate to Avraham. He answers that each man had a job from Hashem we see this when the men talked together the Torah uses plural conjugates but when talking about each one's message it uses the singular implying that it is God talking. Their jobs including the announcement that Sarah will bear a child, the destruction of Sodom, and the curing Avraham. They all had different jobs because one angel does not carry out two jobs. The Sforno however takes a different angle on this verse. He says that the appearance of these strangers was awe-inspiring, similar to in *Shoftim* when Manoach's wife is described as reacting to the angel's awe-inspiring appearance in a way that she did not even dare to inquire his name. Avraham considered these men as emissaries from some king. From here we learn an important lesson: just like Avraham when he saw the messengers from "the king," reacted in a dumbfounded manner and treated these guests with the utmost respect, we should do this when we have the great opportunity to communicate with Hashem 3 times a day, and we should not underestimate the power of these prayers. The *Medrash* brings a parable about a king's friend who knocks on the door of the king and when he answers the friend is gone. We have the opportunity as G-d's "friend" to communicate with him, and when we do not participate in this unbelievable opportunity we are giving up the chance to talk to the king. Avraham took this so seriously that he treated the messengers of the king with his utmost respect.

## HALACHIC ILLUMINATIONS FROM RABBI NACHUM SAUER

There is a *mitzvah* of *Tosefes Shabbos*- to add on to *Shabbos*- adding time from the Friday before and/or the night after *Shabbos*. There are many parameters one must take into consideration when they accept *Shabbos* early. One can bring in *Shabbos* early by davening *maariv* early on Friday night, by lighting candles, or by just declaring "I want to accept *Shabbos* now." One opinion even says that just by thinking "I want to accept *Shabbos*," is considered *Kaballas Shabbos*. However, there is a limit for how early one may accept *Shabbos*. One can only accept *Shabbos* early from *Plag Hamincha* on. *Plag Hamincha* is commonly taught as an hour and a quarter before *Shekia*, sunset. Other opinions hold that *Plag* is an hour and a quarter before *Tzeis Hakochovim*, when 3 stars come out. If one accepted *Shabbos* before *Plag Hamincha*, it is not a valid *Kaballas Shabbos*. If one has accepted *Shabbos* upon themselves, but has not yet davened *mincha*, he should daven *Tashlumin*, a make up, for *Mincha* by saying *Maariv* twice. During the time of *Tosefes Shabbos* one is not allowed to do *Melacha*, work, because it's already *Shabbos* for him for all intensive purposes. However, he may ask another Jew in the community who has not taken on *Shabbos* early to do *Melacha* for him. One is allowed to say *Kiddush* during the time period of *Tosefes Shabbos*. However, there is a *Machlokes* among the *Poskim* whether one can fulfill the *mitzvah* of *Seudas Shabbos* by eating a *Kezayis* of *Challah* during *Tosefes Shabbos*. Some *Poskim* hold that since it is *Shabbos* for the prohibition of *Melacha*, it is also considered *Shabbos* for *Seudas Shabbos*. Other *Poskim* disagree by saying that the *Seudas Shabbos* must take place after *Tzeis Hakochovim*. Therefore, one should make sure to eat a *Kezayis* of *Challah* after *Tzeis Hakochovim* if they have accepted *Shabbos* early.

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## Jacob Fishman '20

