

PARSHAT

Vayera

A PRODUCT OF THE STUDENTS OF

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

Yitzchak Yiranen

Rosh Yeshiva Torah

Balancing Extremes | A Shiur by Rav Netanel Wiederblank

Compiled by Aryeh Kaminetsky, Y.C. '19

Rambam writes in the third *chelek* of *Moreh Nevuchim* (chapter 14) that *akeidas Yitzchak* is one of the most difficult parts of the Torah to understand. One of the primary difficulties lies in the overall goal of the test, for a father to kill his son.

Vilna Gaon writes that a person can only be called a *tzaddik* if he can properly display opposing traits. One example of this would be kindness as well as cruelty. So long as a person is only kind, we cannot tell whether he is truly great or was merely born a kind person. Only when a person applies kindness and cruelty when each are appropriate can we be sure that a person has worked on himself and may therefore be thought of as a *tzaddik*.

This is a theme that runs throughout this week's *parsha*. The beginning of the *sedra* exemplifies Avraham Avinu's impeccable sense of kindness and *chessed*. He shows immense kindness to the guests who visit him and displays profound mercy when he bargains with Hashem on behalf of Sodom. The *parsha* ends, however, with Hashem asking Avraham to perform acts which ostensibly seem quite cruel: sending away Yishmael and slaughtering Yitzchak.

Rav Eliyahu Dessler writes that a *nisayon* consists of a person being tested to see if he is capable of acting against his nature. Fundamental to the *nisayon* of Avraham was the need for him to act against his inherent propensity for kindness and to fulfill *ratzon Hashem* even when he had to act in a seemingly cruel fashion. Similarly, Yaakov's nature was to be truthful and lead a simple life of "*ish tam yoshev ohalim*." And yet, his specific *nisayon* was to act in a deceitful and ambitious fashion with his father.

People sometimes wonder why Yaakov is associated with truthfulness if he was seemingly constantly deceitful, whether with his father or with Lavan. The answer is that since Yaakov was, by nature, a truthful person, his *nisayonos* were in the area of knowing when one must forgo the simplicity of unequivocal honesty and engage in the aggressive behavior necessary to get what he rightfully deserves.

What is fascinating about the *akeida* is that Avraham is often associated with *ahavas Hashem*. The *passuk* in Yeshayahu (41:8) refers to him as "*Avraham ohavi*," and Rambam in the end of *Hilchos Teshuva* says about true *ahavas Hashem*, "That degree is a great degree, indeed and not every scholar attains it; for such was the degree of Avraham our father, whom the Holy One, blessed is He, called His beloved, because he worshiped only because of love." Yet, at the end of the *Akeida*, Hashem tells Avraham, "For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your favored one, from Me" (Bereishis 22:12). The *passuk* is telling us that the *Akeida* was the ultimate expression of *yirah*, that whatever Hashem commands of us we listen.

In this sense as well, we see Hashem often tests us in ways designed to complete our character and develop complete mastery over all of our *midos*. We should strive to make sure that we are completely serving Hashem, both in the areas where our nature compels us, and the areas where we must subdue our *ratzon* to that of Hashem.

So long as a person is only kind, we cannot tell whether he is truly great or was merely born a kind person



Student Organization of Yeshiva

This week's edition of Yitzchak Yiranen is sponsored by SOY

To sponsor email "yitzchakyiranen@gmail.com"

A Nice Vort

Learning from Avraham

Written by Maury Rosenfeld, Y.C. '20

When Avraham Avinu, in Bereishis 18:2, saw the “three men approaching towards him,” he immediately “ran from his tent to meet them.” Before anything else, Avraham insists on bringing water to wash their feet.

Ramban comments that there’s really nothing so esoteric or mysterious going on here; Avraham, known for his outstanding kindness and hospitality, was simply offering to wash the dirty feet of weary travelers before entering a home. Likewise, Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin writes in his *Sefer Ha-Yashar* that we should learn from Avraham’s keen sensitivity towards the needs of his visitors.

This alone teaches us a profound message pertaining to our pursuit of serving Hashem in our interpersonal interactions. Avraham was proactively sensitive. He had waited at the opening of his home, prepared and willing to wash dirty feet. Certainly, there is nobility in tending to the needs of another and responding to a request or a cry for help. And yet, how much more noble it is to not wait and be asked, but to stand at the ready, proactively preempting requests with an acute sensitivity.

Rashi notes a different reason. Avraham was so meticulous in the washing of his guests’ feet so as to avoid bringing the dust of their feet, which they worshipped, into his home. With this understanding, we see a different side of Avraham Avinu. We see Avraham Avinu, perhaps the most open-minded and certainly the most accepting figure in the Torah, laying down a line that could not be crossed. While his house was open to all, he would not bend to allow “dust” to enter his house.

As accepting as Avraham was, as open as his home had been to so many wayfarers, he was nonetheless vigilant of what would cross his threshold. While it is incumbent upon us to emulate Avraham’s lovingkindness, and we should all, on our own levels, strive to engender a household in which guests will feel welcome, it by no means should come at the expense of the firm and secure environment which we work so hard to build. Certainly, we aim to accept the proverbial “three men” who approach us, yet if we are so naive as to not “clean their feet,” we run the risk of dirtying the floor.

Major Machloksim in the Parsha

Written by Adam Brasch, RIETS

Upon seeing three men walking past his tent, Avraham Avinu rushes toward them to offer food, drink, and a place to rest. In this context, Avraham petitions someone not to pass over him, referring to that party as “Adonay” (Bereishis 18:3). To whom was Avraham speaking? Was he aware of the true identity of these men?

- **Rashi #1:** Avraham was speaking to the men. Nonetheless, he addressed them in a very respectful manner, an expression of his strong desire to serve them and provide for them on their journey.
- **Rashi #2:** Avraham was speaking to Hashem, asking Him to wait (as Hashem had just appeared to Avraham) while Avraham went to welcome the men and invite them to rest. According to this view, the Gemara learns that *hachnosas orchim* is greater than *kabbolas pnei Shechinah*.
- **Ramban, Rav Sa’adya Gaon:** Avraham was speaking to the men, but referred to them in this manner because he was aware that they were *malachim*. This additionally justifies why Avraham bowed in front of them.

In introducing the *Akeidah*, the Torah writes, “*VeHaElokim nisah es Avraham (Bereishis 22:1)*.” What does *nisah (nun-samech-hei)* mean in this context, and what does that suggest about the nature of the event?

- **Most *meforshim*:** The word refers to a *nisayon*, a test. However, they struggle to explain the nature of this test, as it is unnecessary from the perspective of Hashem. After all, given that He is omniscient, He was already aware of Avraham’s great *ahava* and *yira*. *Ramban* suggests that the event was a test from the perspective of Avraham, not Hashem. Hashem wanted to draw out Avraham’s latent *kochos* in order to increase his reward.
- **Rashbam:** Similar to its usage in Shemos 17:7, the word here means “to provoke” or “to cause to suffer.” Prior to the *Akeidah*, Avraham established a covenant between his children and the children of Avimelech. This was a mistake on the part of Avraham, and the *Akeidah* was to serve as a punishment. (Issue: If so, why did Hashem not have Avraham go through with the act?)
- **Ibn Ezra:** The *samech* is in place of a *sin*, and the *hei* is in place of an *alef*. Thus, the word here, *nasa (nun-sin-alef)*, means “to raise” or “to make great.” Though Avraham had already achieved great heights as an *oved Hashem*, it was the event of the *Akeidah* which allowed to reach his full potential in that regard.

Foursquare

Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer explains that Avraham saw a cloud hovering over the mountain and recognized it as signifying Hashem's presence. The Midrash tells us that only Yitzchak, and not the two servants, was able to see the cloud. Avraham told the two men, "stay here with the donkey." Why does Avraham denigrate the two men for not seeing the cloud? We know the word *har*" (mountain) is a symbol of attaining physical goals, but one should also recognize spiritual goals as being on top of the mountain. One must have both spiritual and physical ambitions. Many only emphasize the *har*, the physical, but are complacent with the *onen* (cloud), the spiritual. Avraham made his son Yitzchak into a great spiritual personality because the two were inseparable.

Marc Shapiro, Syms '21

1 2

Yitzchak was willing to be slaughtered by his own father, yet this was considered Avraham's passed test? Let's give credit where credit is due! To understand this, we need to look deeper into the essence of the *Avos*. We know that Avraham is *chessed* and Yitzchak is *gevurah*. For Yitzchak to subdue himself for the sake of Hashem was almost natural. Avraham, however, had spent his life teaching the world about Hashem through *chessed* (namely, no child sacrifices). Avraham had to overpower his nature to sacrifice his son, so it is known as his test. The Torah is teaching us that in order to fulfill our potential we need to work on the things that come the hardest to us.

Jacob Bach, Y.C. '21

Avraham Avinu had just received his *bris mila* and had every excuse to refrain from doing *chessed*. However, Avraham was more pained by his lack of ability to do *chessed* than by the pain of the *bris mila*. Therefore, Hashem sent guests to Avraham so that he could be an *ish chessed*. The Torah then tells us the story of Sedom and Amora which were the antithesis of *chessed*. What happens after both stories? Rabbi Benjamin Yudin points out that Avraham goes on to start a nation that is still around today while Sedom and Amora are destroyed. Our *parsha* is here to remind us of the importance of being an *ish chessed*!

Zev Jarashow, Syms '21

3 4

The Midrash states that from the story of Sarah laughing we see, "How great is peace, that even Hashem himself will change what was said." Hashem tells Avraham that Sarah was in disbelief over the news of a new child because of her old age. In actuality, though, it was Avraham who Sarah was calling old and infertile! Hashem did this all to preserve the peace in their home. Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz in *Sichos Mussar* says that from here we see how careful we have to be when it comes to insulting others and maintaining *shalom bayis*. Avraham knew himself that he was old, but if he heard his wife call him old he may have been insulted. Therefore, Hashem changed what Sarah said.

Noam Levy, Y.C. '20

Bottom Line Halacha

Microphones in Halacha

Written by Yoni Rabinovitch, Y.C. '20

How do microphones play out in *halacha*? The basic science behind all microphones, including speakers, hearing aids, and phones, is that sound waves are converted into electrical energy, which is then amplified or transmitted into new sound waves. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach in *Minchas Shlomo* (Siman 9) rules that they may not be used in a *halachic* context since they create a new sound altogether and are not an extension of the source. The vast majority of recent *poskim* seem to agree with this view (*Yechaveh Da'as* 3:54, *Piskei Teshuvos* 689:3). However, not everyone agrees to this. In a footnote to *Minchas Shlomo* (ibid.), Rav Auerbach quotes that the Chazon Ish was *mekel* since the new sound is produced immediately after and as a direct result of the original sound. Similarly, Rav Moshe Feinstein in *Igros Moshe* (OC 2:108) argues that one might be *yotze* if they hear the megillah over a microphone; however, Rav Ovadia Yosef (*Yechaveh Da'as* ibid.) contends that the science behind microphones was not properly explained to Rav Moshe.

Rav Schachter Shlit"a writes in *Nefesh HaRav* (pg. 169) that Rav Soloveitchik was *mesupak* about the entire question. He was worried that the *machmirim* were wrong because they weren't well versed enough in physics, and the *mekilim* were wrong because they weren't well versed enough in *halacha*!

Sugya from the Parsha

Zerizin Makdimin L'Mitzvos

Written by Matthew Wexler, Syms '20

Chazal (*Pesachim* 4a, *Yoma* 28b) learn from “early next morning, Avraham saddled his donkey” (Bereishis 22:3) the principle of *zerizin makdimin l'mitzvos*. Although this is the primary source discussed amongst Rishonim for *zerizin*, the exact source is actually subject to a debate amongst Chazal. The *Yalkut Shimoni* learns *zerizin* from “The next morning, Avraham hurried to the place where he had stood before the Lord” (Bereishis 19:27), which appears in the context of Sedom, and the *Pesikta* (Bereishis 44:11) derives it from “Avraham hastened into the tent to Sarah” (Bereishis 18:6), which refers to *hachnasas orchim*, both of which are also found in Vayera. Rav Asher Weiss in *Minchas Asher* (Bereishis p.136) explains the necessity of two of these sources: the *pssukim* dealing with the *akeidah* and *hachnasas orchim* are necessary in order to teach that *zerizin* applies to both *mitzvos ben adam l'Makom* and *mitzvos ben adam l'chaveiro*.

Seemingly, however, the *Yalkut Shimoni* and the Gemara in *Pesachim* are debating what the exact source of *zerizin* is, and the potential ramifications must be explored. Tosafos (*Pesachim* 4a) explains that the Gemara learns *zerizin* from *akeidas Yitzchak* because that is when Avraham was performing a *mitzva*, while the *passuk* regarding Sedom is not referring to a time when Avraham was performing a *mitzva*. It emerges from Tosafos that Chazal are debating the status of the *mitzva* performed in Sedom versus that of the *akeidah*. What could be the point of contention between the Gemara in *Pesachim* and the Midrash regarding whether Avraham was performing a *mitzva* in Sedom? The Gemara (*Berachos* 26b) learns from the *passuk* of Avraham in Sedom that Avraham established *tefillas shacharis*. There is a well known debate regarding the *chiyuv tefilla*, with Rambam (*Sefer Ha-Mitzvos, Mitzvas Asei 5*) holding that there is a daily *chiyuv tefilla*, and Ramban (*Hasagos Ha-Ramban*) holding that there is not. It is possible that the Gemara is of the opinion that *tefilla* is not a *chiyuv*, and therefore not subject to the rule of *zerizin*, whereas the *Yalkut* is under the assumption that there is a *chiyuv tefilla*, and therefore the rule of *zerizin* can be learned from here.

Alternatively, Rav Asher Weiss explains that perhaps both the Gemara and the *Yalkut* assume that *tefilla* is not a *chiyuv*, but this could be a fundamental debate in the application of *zerizin*: the Gemara holds that *zerizin* applies only to a *mitzva chiyuvis*, whereas the *Yalkut* holds that *zerizin* is not restricted to a *mitzva chiyuvis*.

Using what Rav Asher Weiss says on the Gemara in *Pesachim*, we can explain why *zerizin* doesn't apply to certain *mitzvos*. For example, *kiddushin*, *chalitza*, or *shechita*, if *mitzvos* at all, are only *mitzvos kiyumis* (although this certainly assumes one side of a *machlokes* Rishonim) and therefore *zerizin* does not apply to them. On the other hand, *Mila* and *tekias shofar* are *mitzvos chiyuvis*, and therefore we apply *zerizin*. It must be noted that this approach is only tenable if we assume that *tefilla* is a *chiyuv*, like we explained according to Tosafos, since *zerizin* does apply to *tefilla*.

According to what Rav Asher Weiss says, it is possible to synthesize the three *mekoros* brought by Chazal as working in tandem, not against each other: the *akeidah* teaches that *zerizin* applies to a *chiyuv*, the *Yalkut* expands that even to *mitzvos* that are not *chiyuvim*, and the *Pesikta* broadens this further to the realm of *ben adam l'chaveiro*.

Staff List

Editor-in-Chief

Phillip Dolitsky

Managing Editor

Avrumi Schonbrun

Copy Editor

Jesse Hyman

Associate Editor

Judah Wolkenfeld

Design

Micah Hyman

Publisher

Moshe Spirn

Section Heads

Supervisor

Mordechai Abittan

Rosh Yeshiva Torah

Aryeh Kaminetsky

A Nice Vort

Jed Zaslow

Major Machloksim

Avi Weschler

Halacha

Yoni Rabinovitch

Foursquare

Jonah Ganchrow

Sugya from the Parsha

Eitan Kaszovitz

About Us

Yitzchak Yiranan is a student-run Torah publication that is a project of the Student Organization of Yeshiva (SOY). We aim to provide interesting and information-filled Torah relevant to the current Parsha from the students and Rebbeim of YU, thereby spreading the Torah of Yeshiva University across America. We publish twice monthly. If your shul would like to receive copies, or if you would like to get in contact with us for any reason, please email “yitzchakyiranan@gmail.com.”