

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Vayera

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Nathan Kirsh on the anniversary of his Bar Mitzvah parshah, in loving memory of his dear parents and brother z"l

This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Archie and Tobey Crandell to mark the yahrtzeit of Tobey's mother, Rochel bas Peretz Yehudah z"l

Why is Nachor Here?

Ezer Diena

One might have expected that the story of Akeidat Yitzchak would be directly followed by the next major episode, namely, the death of Sarah. Indeed, various commentaries link the two stories together, citing the tradition that Sarah died after hearing the news that her husband was in the process of sacrificing her son. However, instead of our parshah ending with Avraham's return to Beer Sheva following the near-sacrifice of Yitzchak, which would lead into Sarah's death opening next week's parshah, there is a curious five-verse insertion. Bereishit 22:20-24 tells us that Avraham learned about the many children and grandchildren his brother Nachor had with his wife Milcah, and concubine Re'umah. Why is this important, and why did Hashem put it at this point in the Torah?

Approach #1: Introducing Rivkah

Rashi (commentary to 22:20) and many others note that now that Yitzchak was alive following the akeidah (during which it was also reiterated that he would be the patriarch of the future Jewish people), it was necessary to begin looking for a suitable partner. Since, as we later find out, he marries Nachor's granddaughter Rivkah, the Torah prefaces the story of Avraham's search with the news that she was born. This is somewhat difficult, since we still might have expected it to come following the death of Sarah.

Approach #2: Part of the test

Rabbi Yosef Dov HaLevi Soloveitchik

suggested that the purpose of this section was to record an added challenge to Avraham: "After the Akeida, some questions began to bother Avraham. Why was I required to constantly bring sacrifices and always undergo these bitter tests? Why am I different from my brother Nahor and his wife Milcah who had so many children without suffering long-standing heart-rending yearnings, without taking his mother's only son to the Akeida?" ([Yemei Zikaron p. 162, Wolowelsky translation](#))

It was tough enough for Avraham to suffer personal hardships, but even harder to watch many others thriving without making the same sacrifices he was. [See also Rabbi Mark Dratch, HaMizrachi Yamim Noraim 5780, p. 39.]

Approach #3: Reconnecting

Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin (commentary to 22:20) asked a fundamental question: How could it have been that Avraham was not aware of his brother's life? Avraham clearly felt very emotionally connected to his family, as he had risked his life to save his nephew Lot! (See Rabbi Ovadiah Seforno here, too.)

Rabbi Berlin answered that G-d's command to leave his "land, birthplace, and father's house" (Bereishit 12:1) prohibited Avraham from communicating with his father's family (other than with Lot, who came with him), so that he could remain focused on serving G-d. However, now that Avraham had passed his final test, he

was permitted to ask for news about them, and he immediately did so.

Approach #4: Sensitivity

About 900 years before Rabbi Berlin, Rabbi Saadyah Gaon (Zucker Edition, commentary to 22:20) suggested a different answer to his question. He noted that up until this point, there was a very real possibility that Avraham and Sarah would not have any surviving offspring. Until ages 100 and 90 respectively, Avraham and Sarah did not have a child. Even following that, Yitzchak's survival was not guaranteed until after the Akeidah. It would have been incredibly painful for Avraham and Sarah to hear of Haran and Milcah's combined eight children, and therefore, Hashem, in His great mercy, hid this news from them until it would be less harmful for them to hear. Now, rather than news of Nachor's burgeoning family bringing bitterness, Avraham and Sarah could rejoice knowing that not only were they blessed, but that their family was, as well.

While Rabbi Soloveitchik's approach (#2) highlights the great challenges that Avraham overcame, perhaps an even more important lesson comes from the final suggestion. According to Rabbi Saadyah Gaon, G-d was willing to test Avraham and Sarah with many trials, but realized that it might be too harsh to them to add this pain while they were already struggling with so much more. We too, can trust that even during our darkest days, G-d still looks out for us, even if it may only be seen after the fact.

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Outline

Shemuel I 2:18 noted that Shemuel served G-d; that began an “envelope” of verses which closes when 3:1 repeats that Shemuel served G-d. Inside that envelope, we learn that Eli **blessed** Chanah and her family grew (2:19-21), while Eli’s household was **cursed** (2:27-36). And inside of *that* envelope, we learn that Shemuel grew with G-d (2:21), while Eli’s children ignored their rebuke (2:23-26). And at the heart of the entire envelope, we learn the driver for the entire story: Eli’s sons sinned, abusing the Mishkan and the Jews for personal gain. (2:22)

Our chapter then introduces Shemuel as a prophet. The aged Eli is lying down at night in his quarters; Shemuel is lying down in a separate space. [See Kiddushin 78b, Targum Yonatan, and Malbim regarding Shemuel’s location.] G-d summons Shemuel multiple times, but Shemuel, inexperienced in prophecy, thinks it is Eli calling him. Only after the third call does Eli realize this is a Divine call; he directs Shemuel to respond to the call, “Speak, G-d; Your servant is listening.” (3:2-10)

Shemuel then receives a frightening

message: G-d is planning to publicly destroy Eli’s family, because Eli has failed to rebuke his sons. (3:11-14) The goal of sending a second message may be to emphasize Divine readiness to execute the punishment, a la Bereishit 41:32. Or, this message could be a result of Eli failing to respond adequately to the first message. (Malbim) Alternatively, this message could be meant to bring Shemuel into the story of Eli’s downfall; see below.

Of course, we have seen Eli rebuke his sons. However, either that rebuke was not immediately after the first Divine warning (Abarbanel, Malbim), or it was inadequate (Rashi, Radak, Ralbag). Rashi (3:13) suggests that the appropriate reaction would have transcended rebuke; Eli should have removed them from their position of power.

Shemuel is afraid to convey this message, but Eli insists. Eli accepts the message, demonstrating the loyalty to G-d that had made him a *shofeit* in the first place. (3:15-18)

Our chapter ends by documenting Shemuel’s rise: Shemuel is recognized

as loyal to G-d, and G-d demonstrates Shemuel’s greatness by ensuring his words come true. Also, in contrast with the lack of public prophecy described in 3:1, prophecy now becomes common, in Shemuel’s merit. (Abarbanel)

Insight

G-d chooses to send this second message via Shemuel, and not directly to Eli or via the interlocutor used in 2:27. One might suggest that this is meant to position Shemuel as a prophet for Eli’s family, underscoring their downfall. Just as they would not function independently in the Mishkan (2:36), so their relationship with G-d would be via external prophets.

However, we might contend that Shemuel is also a target of this message. First, to warn Shemuel about his own children. [See 8:1-3.] Second, because he would play an indirect role in the downfall of Eli’s family, as his anointing of King David would lead to the massacre of Nov. And third, because G-d informs righteous people of punishment which will occur in their orbit and on their “turf”, as with Avraham and Sdom. [See Midrash Tanchuma Vayera 6.]

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Holy Land Halachah: Minchah after Lighting in Jerusalem**Rabbi Alex Hecht****Rabbi Yitzchak Weiss, Minchat Yitzchak 9:20**

Question: May a resident of Jerusalem, where the custom is to light Shabbat candles 40 minutes before sunset, pray weekday minchah after lighting candles?

Rabbi Weiss notes that the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 263:15) rules that one who has accepted Shabbat is no longer able to pray minchah. Therefore, Rabbi Avraham Gombiner says that a woman who accepts Shabbat with candle lighting must pray beforehand. (Magen Avraham 263:19) Rabbi Shemuel Loew adds that if she does not pray minchah beforehand, she must pray maariv for Shabbat twice, to compensate for her missed minchah. (Machatzit haShekel ad loc.)

The custom in Jerusalem, to light candles 40 minutes before sunset, sometimes presents logistical challenges - particularly for unmarried yeshiva students living away from home, who must light their own candles. The Shulchan Aruch (263:4) rules that one may not light candles “while the day is still very long,” unless they accept Shabbat at the time of lighting. This is because it must be evident that the candles are being lit in honour of Shabbat. Rabbi Weiss notes that according to some halachic opinions, 40 minutes before sunset would be considered “while the day is still very long.” (Magen Avraham 261:10)

Rabbi Weiss points out that many people are accustomed to pray minchah on Friday afternoon close to - or shortly after - sunset, when there is already a requirement to refrain from *melachah*, relying on the ruling of the Rama, who permits minchah to be recited until nightfall (Orach Chaim 233:1).

Rabbi Weiss notes that the Mishnah Berurah (263:17) says that the leniency for late minchah should not apply to Erev Shabbat, since once one accepts Shabbat, they have declared that is no longer a weekday!

Rabbi Weiss questions the Mishnah Berurah’s argument, based on a mishnah (Shabbat 2:7) permitting the performance of rabbinic prohibitions between sunset and nightfall, in cases of great need. Rabbi Weiss argues that praying weekday minchah may certainly be considered a great need.

Furthermore, Rabbi Weiss proposes that even the requirement to refrain from *melachah* if one lights “while the day is still very long” may not be necessary in Jerusalem. Since the entire city lights at this time, it is apparent that the lighting is in honour of Shabbat.

Therefore, Rabbi Weiss concludes that one may certainly pray minchah after lighting according to the custom of Jerusalem, due to the following considerations:

- Even if one accepts Shabbat with candle lighting, praying minchah is considered a significant need, which would be permitted shortly after Shabbat begins.
- In general, one is not *required* to accept Shabbat when they light candles. (Rama 263:10)
- Even in Jerusalem, where the custom to light 40 minutes before sunset may be considered “while the day is still very long,” and would generally require refraining from *melachah*, the fact that the entire city lights at this time serves as sufficient indication that the lighting is in honour of Shabbat.

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Biography
Rabbeinu Nissim ("Ran")
Rabbi Dovid Zirkind

Rabbeinu Nissim ben Reuven (known as "Ran") was one of the great Spanish sages of the 14th century. Born in 1320 in Barcelona, Rabbeinu Nissim earned recognition as a physician, astronomer and public activist in addition to his achievements in Torah scholarship. Although he never served formally as his community's Rabbi, Rabbeinu Nissim, like many of his predecessors (i.e. Ramban and Rashba), filled that role for all intents and purposes.

Ran was a great teacher of Torah, and he founded a yeshiva which produced a number of future leaders including Rabbi Yitzchak bar Sheshet (Rivash) and Rabbi Chasdai Crescas. Interestingly, there is some debate as to the identity of Rabbeinu Nissim's own teacher. Scholars have suggested it was Rabbeinu Peretz the Tosafist, to whom he refers with the words, "Our teacher, the Rav, the great Kohen." Ran was father to two sons, Chisdai and Reuven.

Rabbeinu Nissim was a prolific author and commentator; his works include a commentary to the Talmud, a commentary to the Rif and a collection of derashot (see translation). It is also estimated that he wrote more than one thousand responsa, although fewer than one hundred have been preserved. An analysis of his contemporaries' writings as well as later rabbinic literature shows the great weight assigned to his opinion on halachic matters, and the influence it had on future generations.

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Torah and Translation
The Akeidah Was Optional
Rabbeinu Nissim, Derashot haRan 6
Translated by Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

הנה מבואר כי המצות והעבירות העקר בהן הכוונה, וימשך ששנים יעשו מעשה אחד בשה ויגדל שכן אחד מהם על האחר לאין חקר, כי האחד יעשהו בלי כונה וכמסתפק ואומר אם לא יועיל לא יזיק, והאחר עושהו בכונה שלמה.

וזהו שרמז הכתוב באמרו "והיה ביום ההוא לא יוסיף עוד שאר ישראל וגו'" עד "קדוש ישראל באמת." ואמנם יתאמת שמי שישען עליו באמת להיות נשען בעובי הקורה בעבודתו ית', שיעשה מעשה יותר רחוק מן הטבע. ויותר רחוק הוא מעשה אברהם אבינו ע"ה בעקידת יצחק, כי לא היה נמשך לו עונש כלל אם לא עקדו כי לא צוהו ד' ית' בזה, והוא הבטיחו "כי ביצחק יקרא לך זרע."

וזהו לשון הכתוב "קח נא את בנך וגו'" וכבר נודע שזה המאמר אינו לשון צווי אלא לשון בקשה, שהראה לו שייטב בעיניו אם ימחול אברהם על הבטחתו ויעקוד בנו, ולו היה אברהם משיבו "הן לי לא נתתה זרע כי אם זה והבטחתני בו ואיך אעשה זה," לא נחשב לו עון ולא תשיגהו עונש מזה, ואעפ"כ לגודל אהבתו את ד' מצא את לבבו לעקדו כדי שיעשה חפץ הש"י לבד, ואע"פ שאילו לא עשאו לא היה משיגו עונש כלל, וזהו ענין העקידה וסודו.

It is clear that regarding commandments and prohibitions, their essential part is the intent. It emerges from this that two can perform the same act equally, and the reward of one will be greater than the other beyond comprehension, for one will perform it without intent as one who is in doubt and say "if it doesn't help, it won't hurt," and the other will perform it with full intent.

And it is to this that the verse hints, "And on that day, the remnant of Israel [and the escaped of the House of Jacob] shall lean no more upon him that beats it, [but shall lean sincerely] on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel. (Yeshayahu 10:20, JPS translation) It has been established as true that one who relies on Him in truth, to lean with the full thickness of the beam on the service of G-d, will perform acts that are far removed from nature. And the farthest removed was that of our father Avraham in the binding of Yitzchak. For he would have incurred no punishment if he had not sacrificed him, as Hashem had not commanded him to do so. Furthermore, He had promised him (Bereishit 21:12): "...for in Yitzchak shall seed be called to you."

And this is the language of the verse, (ibid 19:2): "Take, please [na], your son..." it being well known that this term [na - please] is not one of command, but of request. For He indicated that it would be good in His eyes if Avraham would waive the [Divine] promise and sacrifice his son. And if Avraham had responded: "But You have given me no seed but him and assured me in him, and how can I do this?" it would not have been considered a sin and he would have incurred no punishment. Nevertheless, in his great love for Hashem, he found it in his heart to sacrifice him — solely for the purpose of doing Hashem's will, though no punishment would have overtaken him had he not done so. This is the meaning and secret of the binding [of Yitzchak].

Weekly Highlights: Nov. 16 – Nov. 22 / 18 Cheshvan – 24 Cheshvan

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
שבת Nov. 15-16				
8:40 AM	Ezer Diena	Pre-Shacharit Parshah	BAYT	TFBM
10:30 AM	R' Alex Hecht	Parshah Analysis	Clanton Park	Post-Hashkamah
Before minchah	Ezer Diena	Daf Yomi	BAYT	Rabbi's Classroom
After minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Avodah Zarah	BAYT	Simcha Suite
Motz. 7:30 PM	R' Alex Hecht	Should Israel Help Kurds?	21 Marwill	RSVP to ahecht@torontotorah.com
Sun. Nov. 17				
8:15 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Kidney Donations	Yeshivat Or Chaim	
9:15 AM	Netanel Klein	Omens & Signs	Adas Israel Hamilton	
4:30 PM	R' Sammy Bergman	Chagigah/Chasidut/Chevra	Shaarei Shomayim	Teens
10:00 AM to 11:20 AM	Mrs. Shyndee Kestenbaum R' Alex Hecht	Deceit and Honesty "Stranger and Resident"	Midreshet Yom Rishon Shaarei Shomayim	Women Light Refreshments
Mon. Nov. 18				
8:30 PM	R' Sammy Bergman	Artificial Intelligence 3	Shomrai Shabbos	3rd Floor; Men
Tue. Nov. 19				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Yeshayah, Ch. 23	Shaarei Shomayim	
7:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Book of Shoftim, Ch. 6	129 Theodore Pl.	Men
7:30 PM	Ezer Diena	<i>L'ilui Nishmat R' Arye Rosenberg</i> Parshah: Stealing a Shidduch	BAYT	Boardroom
Wed. Nov. 20				
6:00 AM	Ezer Diena	Gemara Succah	BAYT	West Wing #2
10:00 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Life After Death 3: Gehennom / Gan Eden	Beth Emeth	<i>There is a fee torontotorah.com/life</i>
12:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	The Ethical Challenge 1: Moonlighting	Zeifmans LLP 201 Bridgeland	Lunch served; RSVP rk@zeifmans.ca
7:30 PM	R' Alex Hecht	Bringing G-d Into Our Lives #3: Changing G-d's Mind?	Shaarei Tefillah	
8:00 PM	R' Sammy Bergman	All Things Shabbat	Shaarei Shomayim	Open to All!
Thu. Nov. 21				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Shemuel I, Ch. 14	49 Michael Ct.	Women
4:15 PM	R' Alex Hecht	Junior Beit Midash	Netivot haTorah	
8:30 PM	Ezer Diena	Gemara Beitzah	ediena@torontotorah.com	Men, Advanced
8:30 PM	R' Jeff Turtel	Tzurba: Cosmetic Surgery	Shomrai Shabbos	Men, NEW!
Fri. Nov. 22				
10:30 AM	R' Sammy Bergman	Bava Metzia	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Advanced
<p><u>For University Men, at Yeshivat Or Chaim</u> 10:00 AM Sunday, R' Aaron Greenberg, Gemara Shabbat 11:00 AM Sunday, Beit Midrash Rotation: Contemporary Halachah: R' Torczyner: Kidney Donation 8:30 AM Wednesday, Ezer Diena, Mishlei 8:30 AM Friday, R' Mordechai Torczyner, Parshah</p>				
<p><u>Seder Boker for Men with Rabbi Moshe Yeres, at Yeshivat Or Chaim</u> 10:00 AM to Noon, Mon./Wed. Masechet Megilah, Orot of Rav Kook, Chovot haLevavot 10:00 AM to Noon, Tue./Thu. Parshanut on the Parshah, Sefer Yehoshua, Pinei Halachah</p>				