



פרשת וירא

CIRCLE TIME AT YOUR Shabbos Table

... FOR A Meaningful and Entertaining SHABBOS WITH YOUR CHILDREN ...

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DVAR TORAH IN A STORY >> THE BASHFUL HOST?

Rav Naftali of Ropschitz was known for his sharpness as well as his *chessed*.

The people in the village of Ropschitz were very poor. The Rebbe would listen to each one pour out their heart about their troubles, whether it was the need for expensive medicine for a child, a daughter who needed a *shidduch*, or a large family that needed a bite to eat. Then Rav Naftali would go collecting.

He traveled far to raise funds for others. There were several people of means in the area, but they were few and far between, so Rav Naftali and his *gabbai* spent hours on the road, walking from place to place, riding to distant towns, visiting people who could give *tzedakah*. They trudged through the cold and the heat, sparing no effort.

One day, after a long shlep around a town far from their home, Rav Naftali and his *gabbai* set out for the home of a wealthy man named Kuppel, who lived on the edge of the town. When they approached the house, Kuppel happened to be looking through the curtains. Upon spotting the Rebbe and his *gabbai*, he realized this visit was going to cost him a lot of money.

He hurried to his wife. "Listen, I'm not home!" he hissed. Then he quickly grabbed a ladder from the side of the room and set it up under the trapdoor in the ceiling leading to the attic. He climbed up, pushed the trapdoor open, and cleared an opening in the straw that filled the attic to insulate the house. "Take the ladder away!" he whispered to his openmouthed wife, and scrambled into the loft, buried himself in the straw, and kicked the trapdoor shut.

The hapless woman struggled to move the



PARSHAH RIDDLES

Answers to this week's riddles will appear in next week's issue.

- 1 How many *malachim* appear in this week's *parshah*? Where?
- 2 In which *zechus* did *Klal Yisrael* get the *mann*, *ananei hakavod*, and *be'er*? In which other *zechus* as well?
- 3 Which three places are given names in this week's *parshah*?
- 4 How many *shalsheleses* are there in the Torah? How many in *Nach*? Where are they?



SERIAL >> CHAPTER 4

CHOLENT STORY

A story told in parts, designed to get children to come back to the table for the main dish!

T

The innkeeper, his family, and Reb Beirish had all just drifted off to sleep when the pounding on the door began, along with shouting.

The innkeeper's wife startled at the loud hammering on the door of the little inn. "Zanvil!" she whispered. "Do you hear that? Who is there?"

"No one... It's nothing, dear. Go back to sleep," Zanvil muttered sleepily. "Just some drunk peasants from the village looking for another drink." He rolled over with a snore.

But the banging continued, along with shouts of "Open up!" Zanvil's wife was not convinced.

"Zanvil! Something's happening! There are no peasants out in this crazy storm. There must be an emergency!"

The voices outside sounded rough. They did not seem desperate, they seemed ferocious.

"Zanvil! There are many people out there! Zanvil, do something!"

"Yenta, it's nothing. Go back to—"

Zanvil's words were interrupted by the sound of shattering glass. In a flash, Zanvil was out of bed, in his robe, and at the front door. He reached for a heavy club and peered through the peephole. The rest of the family, also in pajamas and robes, crowded behind him. In one of the guest rooms, Reb Beirish sat up, washed *negel vasser*, and said *Birchos Hashachar*. Everyone could hear the shouting and hollering out in the front yard. It sounded terrible.

Zanvil peeked through the peephole and his face turned gray. He opened his mouth to speak, but at that moment, a heavy thud was heard against the door. The thugs in the snowstorm outside were trying to break it down!

"*Schnell! Schnell!*" Zanvil and his sons began dragging furniture over to the door. They piled up tables and chairs, jugs of wine and whiskey, couches... but the thudding on the door continued. The heavy wooden door was splintering and cracking, and the hinges were starting to give way as well.

Zanvil and his family could only watch as the door splintered in more and more places until it finally gave way completely and burst off its hinges. It lay, beaten and quivering, on the floor. Frosty winds filled the room as snowflakes rushed inside.

In a matter of moments, a gang of about 20 men rushed to the doorway. It took them seconds to push all the tables and chairs out of the way and roll the barrels off. Soon, they had all piled into the room.

One man stepped forward and took off his coat. A long sword hung from his belt, and several daggers were stuck into it as well. He drew the sword, and in one mighty swoop, chopped off the lid of a barrel of whisky. "Dig in, fellas!" he roared.

The gang dropped their coats and reached for the barrel, their swords and daggers glinting and clanging all the while.

TO BE CONTINUED...

2

DVAR TORAH >>

LITVAK, CHASSID, SEPHARDI

Three different angles on a dvar Torah, one each from Litvish, Chassidic, and Sephardic sources. Can be split between the three seudos.

גדולה הכנסת אורחין מקבלת פני שכינה דכתיב (בראשית יח:ג) ויאמר ה' אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך אל נא תעבר ממני

עבדך

"Receiving guests is greater than greeting the Divine Presence, as [we see from Avraham, who] said (Bereishis 18:3), 'Hashem, please do not depart from your servant'" (Shabbos 127).

How did Avraham know that greeting human guests is greater than greeting the Shechinah?

RAV SHIMSHON PINCUS (LITVISH):

Avraham never left the *Shechinah*! He was thinking about Torah and *ruchniyus* all the while as he served the guests. For this reason, one can "prioritize" human guests—because one can take the *Shechinah* with them wherever they go! (See "The Last Word.")

GRA (LITVISH):

If he wasn't supposed to receive guests even while talking to the *Shechinah*, why would Hashem have to make the day so hot to keep guests from disturbing Avraham? He couldn't tend to them anyway since he was talking to the *Shechinah*! The fact that Hashem made it so hot proves that Avraham was supposed to tend to the guest even if the *Shechinah* was present.

ADMOR OF SLONIM (CHASSIDISH):

Of course Hashem wants us to take care of His children more than greeting Himself! What shows greater love, when you greet an old friend or when you look after their children?

BABA SALI (SEPHARDI) AND RAV MEIR OF PREMISHLAN (CHASSIDISH):

Avraham felt weak and sick while greeting the *Shechinah* (which is why Hashem was visiting him). But as soon as he saw the travelers, he felt strong enough to get up and run toward them. That was Hashem communicating this halachah to him!

RAMBAN (SEPHARDI):

Greeting guests is a mitzvah. Greeting the *Shechinah* is a pleasure, not a mitzvah!



PERSONAL GROWTH AVODAH OF THE WEEK

Parshah summary

Parshas Vayeira explores the challenge of accessing character that is contradictory to habits that we have worked hard to create, when the situation calls for it. Avraham was expected to take four contradictory positions, and he did so successfully. Although he battled all his life against paganism and idol worship, he displayed unfathomable kindness, generosity, and understanding to three dust worshippers passing his home, despite being in a weakened state and meeting with the *Shechinah*. He also stuck his neck out to challenge Hashem for the benefit of the evil people of Sedom, who had ensnared his own relatives. Despite the foreignness of the behavior of all these people, he went to great lengths for them. On the other hand, Avraham took very harsh action against his own flesh and blood, although it pained him greatly. He sent Yishmael and Hagar to die in the wilderness and brought his precious Yitzchak as a sacrifice. None of these deaths actually occurred, but Avraham was willing to display what could be mistaken by outsiders as heartlessness. All these tests were successfully met, although they were anathema to him, because the situation demanded it.

We may be 100 years old, but each situation still needs to be evaluated for itself.

This section views the procession of parshiyos and Yamim Tovim as a ladder for personal growth. It identifies a theme in the parshah and a related area that needs growth, and assigns a weekly mission based upon it.

AVODAH OF THE WEEK:

1. Twice this week, when you are about to follow a habitual, well-ingrained protocol in response to a situation, stop and reevaluate from a fresh perspective: Is this the correct response to this event?
2. Review the past week. Can you identify a specific situation in which kindness needed to be shown instead of the usual strength, and one in which strength needed to be used instead of kindness?

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S RIDDLES:

1. Which three morning mitzvos are thanks to the actions of Avraham Avinu? **Avraham established tefillas Shacharis, and as a reward for not taking anything from Sedom, he was given the mitzvos of tefillin (straps) and tallis (tzitzis with tcheiles).**
2. Which three types of birds are mentioned in *Parshas Lech Lecha*? **The tor and ben yonah (dove and pigeon—separate minim according to one opinion) and the ayit (vulture or buzzard).** Can you think of two other types of birds mentioned in *Chumash*, besides the list of nonkosher birds in *Shemini* and *Re'eh*? **The raven (Noach) and the nesher (Haazinu).**
3. Where do *Chazal* find the source for the concept of *notrikon* (*drashos* involving initials or shortened or similar-sounding words) in the Torah? **Rashi points it out. The Torah says that changing Avram's name to Avraham hinted at "av hamon goyim—the father of many nations."** Can you find five other examples of *notrikon* in this week's *parshah*? **The names of some of the four and five kings are explained in similar ways:**

אחרפל = אמר פול

ברע = ב-רע

ברשע = שנתעלה ברשע

שנאב = שונא אביו

שמאבר = שם אבר

4. **There are many other examples as well.** Which names of places in the *parshah* are also regular words? **חֹבְהָ, גֹיִם, דָּן, and maybe קָדָשׁ.**

Did you notice that the story of the haftorah, besides relating to the depth of the parshah or day, usually sounds like it is right out of current events?

HAFTORAH FROM THE HEADLINES

STORY OF THE HAFTORAH

The haftorah relates two miracles of the *navi* Elisha.

The *navi* Ovadyah was an officer in the court of King Achav, who persecuted the *nevi'im* mercilessly (Ovadyah was not a *navi* at the time). Ovadyah single-handedly supported 100 *nevi'im*, hiding them and providing food for them. He used his entire fortune to care for them and incurred deep debt. He died shortly thereafter, leaving his wife and two sons penniless and with crushing debt.

Ovadyah's wife went to Elisha Hanavi for advice. Elisha asked what she had at home—he wanted to help her, but *bracha* needs to rest on something. She had nothing but a flask of oil (the same one that would later be the hero of the Chanukah story). Elisha told her to collect every jug and container she could get her hands on, bring them into her home, and lock the door—miracles need privacy.

She began pouring oil into containers, and the oil continued to flow until every receptacle—even broken ones—was filled. She sold the oil, paid off the debt, and lived comfortably off the rest.

When visiting Shunam, Elisha often stopped at the home of a particular woman. This woman, who is not named, could tell a saintly man when she saw one (partly because flies never bothered him), and she advised her husband to build an attic room for him. They did so, and Elisha and his less-than-worthy attendant, Geichazi, stayed there often. Elisha wished to repay her for her kindness, but she refused all offers.

Geichazi noted that she was childless, and Elisha promised her, "Next year at this time you will hug a son!"

She resisted, saying she was too old, but Elisha held firm to his promise. She was bothered by his refusal to promise that

he would come see the child himself and sensed something amiss about the *bracha*.

The child was born and brought great joy to his parents. As a youth, though, he was struck by a sudden headache while out in the field. His father brought him to his mother, and the boy died in his mother's arms. She laid him on Elisha's bed and ran to call the *Navi* without telling her husband (since miracles need secrecy). Elisha gave Geichazi his staff and sent him to revive the child with instructions to speak to no one; but Geichazi bragged about his mission, which, unsurprisingly, failed. The woman had insisted that Elisha come himself. He arrived, locked the door, laid on the child's body, and revived him.

The child grew up to become a *navi* himself. There are varied reports among the *mefarshim* as to whom he was: Chavakuk, Ido, Oded, or Yonah.

CONNECTION TO THE PARSHAH

Ovadyah and his wife and the Shunamite woman excelled in the mitzvah of receiving guests and earned miracles in return. In the *parshah*, Sarah earned the right to a child through her mitzvah of *hachnasas orchim* (Midrash), and Lot was saved in that merit. Sarah and the woman were both promised a "son this time next year." Both Yitzchak and the woman's son were considered dead and revived; Yitzchak is viewed as having been an actual *korban*.

RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES

Challenges of health and economic survival are foremost on everyone's mind. The haftorah teaches that those things are entrusted to Hashem (and on rare occasions, a *navi*) and only in Him must our faith lie. The mitzvah of caring for the stranded can help. When one needs a miracle, secrecy is best.

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

heavy ladder back to its place. Just as she managed to settle the ladder, knocking was heard.

She opened the door a crack and greeted the Rebbe and his *gabbai*. "My husband is...er, not home. Sorry, please come back later," she said, and tried to shut the door.

But the *gabbai* had his foot in the doorway. "If you don't mind, would we be able to stop here for a minute to rest? We have come a very long way. And perhaps you have a bit of water for the Rebbe?"

With little choice, the flustered woman opened the door, and the Rebbe and his *gabbai* settled on chairs to wait for the water which she hastened to bring.

Meanwhile, the Rebbe's sharp eyes traveled across the room, and he noticed that the ladder seemed out of place, almost as if it had been too heavy for the person who had moved it last. And there were bits of straw strewn on the rungs... His eyes traveled to the ceiling, looking for a trapdoor. Sure enough, there was one there. A few bits of straw were sticking out, and sure enough, there was fresh straw on the floor under the trapdoor...

The Rebbe nudged his *gabbai* and pointed out what he had seen. "Please check out the attic," he said.

The *gabbai* moved the ladder, climbed it, and opened the trapdoor. A tumble of straw greeted him. He began pushing straw aside and soon found a pair of shoes. A bit more digging revealed socks in the shoes and trouser legs and actual legs... Pretty soon the hapless homeowner was hauled out of the hay.

Red-faced and mortified, Kuppel sheepishly descended the ladder and apologized to the Rebbe as he ruefully reached for his stash of cash.

"Don't apologize!" the Rebbe answered with a smile. "You taught me *pshat* in a *Rashi!* *Rashi* in *Parshas Vayeira* points out that receiving guests is greater than greeting the *Shechinah*. I always wondered how that could be, but now I see. The Torah tells us that when Moshe met the *Shechinah*, he hid his face. But then you showed me that sometimes, when one sees guests arriving, he doesn't just hide his face, he hides his entire body!"



OUT FOR DISCUSSION

See this week's *Circle* magazine for the full comic story and halachic dilemma.

Generally, when someone sends a *shaliach* to purchase something and the merchant gives the *shaliach* extra, Chazal have established that the *shaliach* must share the extra with the person who gave him money to make the purchase.

Therefore, they should split the extra doughnut.

EXPLANATION:

According to one approach, when a merchant gives extra, it belongs to the *shaliach*. However, since the *shaliach* received the benefit because of someone else's money, i.e., the one who sent him, Chazal enacted that the *shaliach* and the one who gave the money should share the extra item (Rif *Kesubos* 57b). Others (Rashi *Kesubos* 98b) maintain that the halachah that the extra should be shared is because we do not know whether the merchant intended to benefit the *shaliach* or the person who sent him, t h e one who is paying for the purchase. Since the matter is uncertain, they should share benefit (*Choshen Mishpat* 183:6). A difference between these two approaches arises when the merchant says that he wants the extra to go to the *shaliach*. According to the first explanation, it must still be shared, whereas according to the second explanation, since we are no longer uncertain about the merchant's intent, it belongs exclusively to the *shaliach* (See *Shulchan Aruch HaRav Mechirah* 11).



כִּי בָרַךְ אֶבְרָכְךָ וְהִרְבָּה אַרְבֵּה אֶת זְרַעְךָ כְּכּוֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְכַחֵל אֲשֶׁר עַל שְׂפַת הַיָּם

“For I will doubly bless you and doubly multiply your offspring to be as the stars of the heavens and the sand of the beach”

(*Bereishis 22:17*).

Yitzchak also received this *bracha*:

יצחק = 208 = ארבה (*Pituchei Chotam*)

Also, Yitzchak’s defense of *Klal Yisrael* brings the *geulah*:

נחמו נחמו = 208 = יצחק (*Chida*)

THIS DATE IN JEWISH HISTORY



On which date was Hevel murdered by Kayin? According to *Bereishis Rabbah 22*, it was on the 50th day from his birth (*Rosh Hashanah*), which comes out 20 Cheshvan. The Arizal, however, understands that the date was 49 days from creation. According to *Tosafos* on *Sanhedrin 38b*, Hevel was actually not born on the same day as Kayin, but some time later, which would push off the 49- or 50-day count. *Pirkei d’Rebbi Eliezer* says he was killed on Erev Pesach, and Hevel’s *korban* was actually a *Korban Pesach*! *Midrash Tanchuma* says he lived to be 40 years old.



HALACHAH

Bikur Cholim



1. One who performs the mitzvah of *bikur cholim* has fulfilled the *mitzvah d'Oraysa* of *ahavas rei'iim*. The obligation to do the mitzvah, however, is only *d'rabbanan*. The mitzvah applies to people who are halachically defined as sick, meaning bedridden or suffering from a whole-body pain or weakness. That is why Hashem only visited Avraham on the third day after the *milah*—when the pain affects the entire body. Visiting someone who is stuck at home with a broken leg but is up and about is a *chessed*, but usually not *bikur cholim*. Visiting people that are hospitalized for mental illness is likewise a *chessed*. Under some circumstances, it is better not to visit someone who finds it difficult to speak. One should take care not to cause fear of death to a person through his visit—one should not come from far away without consulting a *rav* first.

Should enemies visit each other? The Acharonim debate this question. One

should call first and get a sense of whether it will be appreciated.

2. *Bikur cholim* does not mean visiting the sick, it means checking on the sick. The mitzvah is fulfilled by examining their state and seeing what they need so that the visitor can help out. Also, one must *daven* for the sick person in order to fulfill the mitzvah. Saying “*refuah sheleimah*” may minimally fulfill the *tefillah* aspect. The visit is necessary for the *tefillah* because one is inspired to pray more devotedly when they see the condition of the sick person.

Many *teshuvos* discuss whether there is a mitzvah of *bikur cholim* if one calls a sick person on the phone. Checking on the sick person and the inspiration for *tefillah* are not really accomplished over the phone. Furthermore, an essential part of the mitzvah is what Hashem did for Avraham: just being present.

There is nevertheless a mitzvah to visit someone unconscious. Some say the

minimum visit is three hours—but if you do that, make sure you are not in the way or becoming a burden on the sick person’s family!

3. Should one visit someone with a contagious disease? The Rama discusses visiting someone with contagious jaundice, such as hepatitis. Rav Yisrael Salanter sent students to visit people sick with cholera during an epidemic and promised that no one would be infected. Tzitz Eliezer notes that *gedolei Yisrael* put themselves in danger to assist people, and none was harmed. Nevertheless, he *paskens* emphatically that one should not visit someone if it puts them in a realistic danger.

We *pasken* that it is permitted to do *bikur cholim* on Shabbos, but one should not intentionally leave it for Shabbos if they have free time during the week. Some say one should not sit on a chair near the bedside of a sick person, because the *Shechinah* is present.

THE LAST WORD

A one-liner worth remembering

“EVEN WHILE WE ARE BUSY IN THE OFFICE, OUR THOUGHTS CAN BE WITH HASHEM... WHEN WE ARE IN SHUL, OUR THOUGHTS MANAGE TO BE WITH BUSINESS!”

—Rebbe Nachman of Kosov



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