



## Haftarah Weekly

This week's haftarah is about Elisha. First, we read about a poor woman (Ovadyah the Navi's widow) who can't afford to pay her creditor – King Achav. Elisha performs a miracle that allowed her to free herself and her family from the bond of debt imposed on her.

Second, we have the famous story of the Shunamite woman. Whenever the prophet Elisha travels through her town she provides him with food and lodgings. As a reward Elisha tells her that in a year's time she will give birth to a child. The barren woman is disbelieving. She says 'Al techazev b'shifchatechah' – 'don't lie to your maidservant.'

However, a year later she gives birth to a son. Unfortunately the boy dies a few years later. The boy's mother calmly travels to Elisha and tells him of the tragedy. He sends his disciple Gehazi to try and remedy the situation, but Gehazi fails. Then, Elisha famously arrives and revives the child himself.

In the Sedra Hashem rebukes Sarah for laughing when she hears that she will give birth. The Ramban asks: Why should she believe that she will give birth to a child – after all, she was ninety years old and her husband even older –

why should she believe that she will give birth?

He answers that someone on Sarah's level, who was married to Avraham - the greatest man of his generation, should have been able to see Hashem's hand in every event. She should have recognised that the 3 travellers could have been m'lachim from Hashem and therefore were telling her that the so-called 'impossible' would actually happen.

In our haftarah, after the Shunamite woman's child dies, she calmly puts the boy on Elisha's bed, saddles her donkey and rides to Elisha. She even answers her husband that 'Shalom' – 'everything is fine.' She doesn't grieve, but goes straight to the man of G-d, Elisha. This is a testament to her faith in Hashem.

She believed wholeheartedly that Hashem can do the 'impossible' if He wants. Hashem revives her son, so we see her trust paid off.

We can derive an important lesson from this. Whenever something seems impossible, trust in Hashem, daven to Hashem, and He will answer your prayers.

*Written by Adam Gaventa*

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## THE LIVING TORAH

לעלוי נשמת ה' אליהו רחמים בן מאיר דוד ע"ה ואחיו ר' עבדאללה פרג בן מאיר דוד ע"ה  
No. 262 Parshas Vayeira 5768 מס' רסב פרשת וירא תשס"ח

### Lottery, how much do you bet?

There is a moshul about a man in a shiur where the participants began talking about what would happen if they won the lottery. They discussed how much they would give to tzedokoh, how much they would save, whether they'd buy a new house, new kitchen and so on. During this conversation a man in the back row stood up and said "You are all fools - obviously if you win the lottery it has come straight from G-d therefore you should give it all to tzedokoh." With that he left the room.

Amazingly enough a few weeks later the man did win the lottery. However, he didn't give all money to tzedokoh. Didn't put his money where his mouth was. It seems that it is easy to talk about beating the yeitzer horah but in practice it is very hard.

You might want to say that this man did nothing wrong - he probably gave his 10% or even more and didn't have to give all of it anyway! That would be perfectly fine to say but this same story is shown in a gemarah about this week's Sedra (Sanhedrin :פט).

It says in this week's Sedra at the beginning of

the akeidah story "achar had'vorim ho'ayleh" "after these words". What words? One answer is that Yishmael was gloating to Yitzchok about the fact that he (Yishmael) did bris miloh at the age of 13 but Yitzchok had it easy at 8 days! Yitzchok said to him "You served Hashem with one body part. If Hashem asked me to give my whole body I would give it willingly." When the Satan heard this he quickly told Hashem. Soon after is the episode of the Akeidah happens. When Yitzchok worked out that Avrohom wanted to sacrifice him he could have tried to force Avrohom off and refuse to be sacrificed. However, he didn't.

When he was answering Yishmael he was telling the truth. He really was prepared to give his whole body in service to Hashem. He was honest with himself and actually 'put his money where his mouth was'.

We can learn from this to be always honest with ourselves and not to underestimate the yeitzer horah.

*Contributed Anonymously*

## Avrohom's Yeitzer Hora

In order to fully understand the epic episode of עקידת יצחק which occurs at the end of our sidra we must look back at what happens in last week's sidra, לך לך. The Possuk in שביעי of לך לך says as follows:

"ויפל אברהם על פניו ויצחק ויאמר בלבו הלבן מאה שנה יולד ואם שרה הבת תשעים שנה תלד" (בראשית י"ז י"ז)

To gain greater insight into the happenings of this פסוק we must first comprehend the difference between when a פסוק uses ויאמר אל לבו and ויאמר בלבו. This discrepancy is born out from the fact that every single Jew is created in this world with both a יצר הרע and a יצר טוב; and also that there are two types of people when it comes to encountering the יצר הרע. The righteous ones who are afraid of being misled by their יצר הרע, which resides in the heart, put up a constant fight in order to quash it. Therefore when the תורה describes the internal goings on of a צדיק it writes as in reality he is speaking against his heart's advice which is trying to lead him astray. However on the other hand there are the wicked ones who live by the impulses of their evil inclination and hence when the תורה mentions them it says ויאמר בלבו as his decisions are those of the יצר הרע. If so the obvious question on our possuk is that why does it say about אברהם that he spoke בלבו as a wicked person does?

גמרא ירושלמי מסכת אברות ברכות אבינו had totally transformed his יצר הרע so that it was no

longer an adversary to his spiritual aspirations. If this is so that now his יצר הרע was a force for the good, the Torah specifically writes אברהם as בלבו was taking council from the Evil Inclination itself as it was a source of spiritual energy and excitement. We can bring a proof to this from two פסוקים we know well from our learning and prayers. The פסוק שמע states that "ואהבת את ה' אלקיך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך ובכל מאדך" and Rashi famously comments that the word לבבך is written with the letter ב twice to teach us that we must serve HaShem with both our יצר טוב and our יצר הרע. Furthermore, the verse in נחמיה which we say everyday in our davening says, "אתה הוא ה' האלקים" אשר בחרת באברהם והוצאתו מאור כשדים ושמת שמו בלבו" in which it describes Avraham's heart faithful to G-d. But instead of saying לבו which it would usually it instead says לבב exactly as the שמע commands – with both inclinations!

This answers our question beautifully, but we are working under the presumption that אברהם had already reached this lofty level when the event described in the פסוק at the top occurred. Perhaps this was not the case and that when it says בלבו it

was his negative יצר טוב? However in truth אברהם had transformed his evil inclination by this point and we can verify this from events that preceded.

### Riddle of the Week

Who was the mother of Avrohom Ovinu?

*Previous week:*

The shortest number of words in any Possuk in the Torah is 3. How many such Pesukim are there?

*Answer: 13*

### M'lachah of the Week

**Kotzer** (Reaping) includes any plant that is uprooted from its growing. The prohibition even includes making use of visible roots which are at least 3 tefachim (approximately 30cm) above the ground. This also includes fruit picking, breaking branches, uprooting grass. This connects to the famous example of dragging a bench on grass, which could result in grass being uprooted. Also, one must be careful not to pick up a potted plant that is resting directly on the earth. Since, while it is resting on the ground, it is getting some nourishment from the earth itself, picking it up is considered like uprooting it. This restriction applies whether the pot is made of wood or earthenware, or whether the pot has a hole in it or not.

## Avrohom's Yeitzer Hora (Continued)

In the first פסוק of this chapter י, HaShem appears to and says, "התהלך לפני והיה תמים" – "Go in My ways and you will be perfect". Rashi in his third explanation says that at that point in time אברהם was deficient in five limbs, the two eyes and two ears and his foreskin and by HaShem adding the letter ה (numerical value of 5) to his name, making it אברהם, it would now have the גמטריה of 248 which is the number of limbs in a complete person. We see that when אברהם had his ברית מילה and became perfect he simultaneously became אברהם.

The מהר"ל asks that before this was אברהם blind and deaf? Was he lacking in those four limbs? The מהר"ל answers that before he became אברהם at his ברית מילה, his eyes and ears were attempting to mislead him and he had to fight them, hence they were deficient. However once he became אברהם he no longer had to fight them, since the יצר הרע had been turned to the good. We also see this correlation from the possuk in נחמיה where it says, "ושמת שמו אברהם ומצאת את לבבו" which means that HaShem made his name אברהם with the extra ה and only then was his heart fully faithful to G-d and he attained the level of conquering his יצר הרע!

The question that is still bothering us is that does the גמרא which discusses the significance of the name אברהם highlight the correspondence to the 248 limbs in a human being. Surely it is demeaning of אברהם to symbolise him as a mere collation of bones, organs and human tissue? Surely אברהם stands for something of more spiritual or religious meaning? Answers the מהר"ל that this גמרא is teaching us an awesome תורה that we shouldn't perceive אברהם as a far fetched spiritual being who is impossible to emulate but rather as a normal human being with 248 limbs and even so attained phenomenal heights. We say that אברהם

introduced monotheism into the world however more accurately what he founded was a service of G-d that uses the physical in order to achieve the spiritual. The nations of the world believe that the physical is the antithesis of the spiritual and hence the only way to spirituality is to completely forsake the body and materialism. Therefore they become celibate, fast for months at a time, spend many months in solitary confinement in the Himalayan mountains and self mutilate. אברהם came and taught us that what HaShem really wants is for us to use His spectacular creation and elevate it to the sublime. He himself took the force of evil within him, the יצר הרע, and turned it to a force of good. Therefore, the 248 limbs of a physical human being is exactly what אברהם represents as he showed us how to take this physical body and make it into a vehicle of the service of G-d.

Now coming back to understanding the unfathomable test of עקידת יצחק using what we have learned about אברהם. The glaring question is that if אברהם had transformed his יצר הרע what was the test? Without an evil inclination he has no other desires but to do the will of HaShem and if so it's not an immense challenge for him?

The answer is that in truth the עקידת יצחק was not an internal fight for אברהם between טוב ורע, good and bad, but rather a test to be able to distinguish אמת ושקר, truth and falsehood. In reality the עקידה mirrored the episode of אדם in גן עדן when it was also a matter of אמת ושקר, truth and falsehood. In some dimension שקר who chose חטא אדם הראשון who chose אמת whereas אברהם did אמת.

*Taken from a Shiur by Rabbi Y Hartman*

*Transcribed by Shmuli Sagal*

### Gematria of the Week

The Gematria of מצחק is 238 – the same as להרג. From here we learn out that Yishmael tried to kill Yitzchak. The Medrash expounds on this by specifying that Yishmael would arm himself with a bow and fire arrows at Yitzchak.

בעל הטורים (כ"א:ט)