

The Father Is Also Cured

(א"ב:י) אל אברם לך לך מארעך וממולדתך ומבית אביך אל הארץ אשר אראך 'ויאמר ה
*And Hashem said to Avram, "Go for your self from your land, from your birthplace,
 and from your father's house to the land that I will show you". (12:1)*

There was great excitement in the town of Brody, as two infants had been born on the same day and both of them were due to be circumcised on the eighth day. The first *Bris* took place immediately after the early dawn prayers. R'Avraham, the Maggid of Trisk served as the *sandek*.

The second *bris* was however delayed. The infant's father lay on his deathbed and the custom in such a tragic situation had always been to postpone the *bris* until the father died so that the infant could bear his name. As a result the family of the ill man waited by his bedside.

R'Shlomo Kluger, the rabbi of Brody, had been invited to be the *sandak* of this child. When he learned that the family was waiting for the father to die, he was horrified. He went quickly to R'Avraham and urged that he come with him quickly. They went to the home of the dying man; they found him lying with his eyes tightly shut, his breathing very laboured. A *minyán* of men stood around with candles lit, waiting for the soul to depart.

"Stop this! Extinguish those candles at once", he yelled. "We are about to perform a *bris*!" R'Shlomo commanded. At the word *bris* the father's eyelids fluttered. R'Shlomo began the ceremony. Suddenly the father's eyes flew open and he asked for some water to wash his hands. After he had washed them, he said that he would like to recite the father's blessing, "...to enter him into the covenant of Avraham Avinu." The ceremony was concluded with

great rejoicing.

In the following days, the father grew better and better until he recuperated completely and lived for many years. When R'Shlomo Kluger left the house with the guest, R'Avraham of Trisk, he said "do not think for a moment that I have just performed a miracle in bringing about the fathers amazing recovery. I simply applied what I learned from the words of our sages regarding the three angels who visited Avraham. They say that one came to heal Avraham, another to destroy Sedom and a third to inform Sarah of the good news of the future birth of Yitzchak; the first angel was also to rescue Lot. Why, thought I, was it necessary to send one angel to perform these two tasks? Is there a shortage of angels in heaven? The answer is that Lot's merit alone would not have been enough to summon an angel down from heaven but since he had already come to give Sarah the good tidings, he was able to save Lot as well."

"Here, too, perhaps, the fathers merit alone may not have been enough to warrant a special angel coming to cure him but when we began the *bris* ceremony, the angel of the covenant – Eliyahu Hanavi – came, as he always comes and once he was here already, he was able to cure the father and as you see, honoured *Magid*, my reasoning was correct!"

By Daniel Lefkowitz
(adapted from Tales Of Tzaddikim)

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 ה"עבדאללה פרג בן מאיר דוד ע' ה' ואחיו ר"אליהו רהמים בן מאיר דוד ע' לעלוני נשמת ר

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מס' רצ"ד

When the water in the skin ran out, she cast the lad beneath one of the trees. She went and sat herself down at a distance...for she said, "Let me not see the death of the child."
 (21:15-16)

R' Shimshon Refael Hirsch says that Hagar's whole behaviour arouses very distressing feelings and reveals the imperfections found in the characters of the descendants of Cham, the son of Noach. A Jewish mother would not have even forsaken her child, even if all she could do was to soothe him for the millionth part of a second. To abandon one's own child just because 'one cannot bear to see the misery' is the cruel egoism of a human nature which is still crude. In truly humane people, their sense of responsibility would master any other selfish feelings and despite however painful the situation they would have offered their assistance even if it only means their presence.

This point of R'Hirsch that 'the feelings of duty master the strongest emotions, and makes one forget one's own pain' is an extremely important point because parents may not just love their children, they have a duty towards them as an extension of themselves. Children did not choose to be brought to the world and therefore parents have an obligation to provide their child with the means to achieve success and happiness. Despite the

way that modern western civilisation have interpreted happiness to mean pleasure, there are many ways in which parents can give their children 'happiness', one consisting of spiritual fulfilment as well as basic physical needs. This is by providing children with a proper torah education and modelling spirituality for them. The message that we can take from the possuk is that parents must be careful not to put their needs above those of their child.

Rabbi Twerski writes that with reference to youngsters taking drugs, he has seen cases where the parents did not do their utmost to help their child, because to do so would expose that there is a problem in the family and that would reflect negatively upon them. Too many cases of drug use go untreated because parents do not wish to confront the problem. Parents have a right to protect their reputation, however, when this conflicts with what is best for their child, "the feelings of duty should master the strongest emotions, and should make one set aside one's own painful feelings."

The torah is a guide book rather than a history book and the episode of Hagar and Yishmael is a lesson to be taken to heart.

By Asher Weisz
Adapted from 'Rabbi Twerski on Chumash'

Times for Shabbos - זמני שבת -

The Order

(א'ב:כ) ויהי אחר הדברים האלה
And it was after these things... (22:1)

Rashi explains that the Akeida took place after the party which Avraham made for Yitzchak when he was two years old. As he did not give any Korbanos to Hashem at that time, the Satan began to question Avraham's faith. Alternatively, it occurred after the incident when Yishmael boasted to Yitzchak about how great he was because he had willingly undergone bris milah at the age of thirteen. He then criticised Yitzchak, as he was forced to undergo his bris milah. Therefore, Hashem gave Yitzchak as well as Avraham a chance to prove themselves.

Regardless of which of these interpretations of the possuk you accept, there is a glaring question evident from the order of the parshios. One would expect the

parsha of the Akeida to be directly after the events mentioned above. However, this is not so. The whole of perek 21 talks about the covenant which Avraham makes with Avimelech. Why is this seemingly unrelated subject interjected in between two highly connected events?

R' Ya'akov Kanievski in his sefer Emes Le'Ya'akov answers as follows. Hagar was promised by an angel in last week's Sedro that Yishmael would grow up to be a great nation. The Zohar says that it was as a result of the merit that Yishmael received for his bris milah that he received such a blessing. Not only that, but that he would also have the privilege of living in Eretz Yisroel until the time of the geula.

We find throughout Nach that the Pelishtim, the people of Avimelech, are constantly referred to as

מלאכה of the week

Mechabeh and Ma'avir - Extinguishing and Lighting Fires

Mechabeh is extinguishing fire; *Ma'avir* is kindling fire. These two *Melachot* are closely related; one is the opposite of the other. Fire was used for cooking the dyes during the construction of the *Mishkan* and later for the *Korbanot* (offerings) and is therefore prohibited. One practical application of these prohibitions is electricity. One cannot use electricity on *Shabbat*. For example, turning lights on and off is prohibited.

“areilim”- uncircumcised. Even though they were famous for their status of being uncircumcised, Avraham did not refrain from entering into a covenant with them. Avraham was trying to teach that just because you have not undergone bris milah, does not disqualify you from being an honourable person. So too on the flip side, the merit gained by doing bris milah does not automatically make you a tzaddik.

This is the link between the story of the covenant of Avimelech and the Akeida as well as the story Yishmael's bris milah. The story of Avimelech teaches us that the aveirah of being an arel (uncircumcised) can be overlooked if that person is ultimately a good person. In contrast, Yishmael thought he was great because of his bris milah, but that merit counted for little relative to the amount of Aveiros which he committed. Thus it will ultimately end in the days of the geula. On the other hand, the akeida, was viewed as a meritorious act, because it was not one solitary act of bravery but rather a reflection of the general mode of behaviour in which Avraham conducted his life.

We too should not pride ourselves on one mitzvah or one great deed which we may have done in the past. We should make the performance of all our mitzvos something which we see as an essential part of every day of our lives and a reflection of our general mode of behaviour.

By Aharon Goldwater

Three For Four

(ב:ח) וישא עיניו וירא והנה שלשה אנשים נצבים עליו וירא וירץ לקראתם מפתח האהל וישתחו ארצה
He lifted his eyes and saw, and behold three men were standing near to him. He saw them, and ran from the door of the tent to meet them, and he bowed down to the earth. (18:2)

“In the beginning of this week's sedra, Rashi tells us that the three men who appeared before Avraham Avinu had specific missions. These tasks were: healing Avraham; informing Sarah of the future birth of her son; the destruction of the city of Sedom and saving Lot. Why did Hashem send only three Melochim for four jobs?

There are several answers given to this question. Rashi explains that the Malach that helped heal Avraham was the Malach Raphael, the same Malach that was sent to save Lot. Seeing as these two deeds both involved missions of rescue, they were in theory the same task.

The Chiddushei Harim, the first Gerrer Rebbe offers a brilliant alternative answer. In truth, there were only three missions. Once Malach Raphael had healed Avraham, he had completed his job. However, something happened during the encounter of the Melochim with Avraham that suddenly necessitated a new mission.

When the Melochim asked where Sarah was and Avraham replied 'in the tent', a new principle for morality was established. Chazal tell us that the principle of '*Kol kevodas bas hamalach p'nima*.' This teaches us that a woman's place is at home and not outside. Women of the future generations would not go out to war.

King David was a great grandson of Ruth, who, in turn, was a descendant of Lot's son, Moav. We later learn that the people of Moav attacked the Jewish people when they were about to enter the land of Israel. This act of war caused Hashem to decree that a Jew may not marry a Moavite. This poses a difficulty: How could David be the Jewish king when his great grandfather, Bo'az, married a Moavite – a forbidden person.

However, only Moavite men were forbidden. Moavite women were permitted, as they did not go to war with Israel and thus Bo'az did not violate any decrees. This was only in the merit of the modesty displayed by Sarah.

When the Melochim arrived to complete their tasks, Lot did not need to be saved. This is because Ruth would not be allowed to enter the Jewish people as Moavite women would also have gone to war and would therefore also be considered forbidden. This is why initially, only three Melochim came. However, once Malach Raphael had completed his mission and Sarah introduced this principle, the necessity of saving Lot was created and Malach Raphael was instructed to fulfil this new mission.

*By Daniel Lefkowitz
 (based on a shiur given by Rabbi Golker)*

Riddle of the Week

I'm too young to be Parve. Who am I?
(Answer in next week's Living Torah)

Answer to Last Week's Riddle

Who was the first musician in history?
 Answer: Yovam

Congratulations to all those who answered correctly. This weeks winner was Rafi Cohen

Prizes have been sponsored by various local Jewish shops to be raffled off to those who successfully answer the weekly general knowledge question!!! Everyone is welcome to submit an answer by emailing us at LIVINGTORAH@HASMONEAN.CO.UK