



Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 79

Vayera | Trust – The Foundation To Everything



MESILLOT

Pathways to the Soul

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly parasha
by **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l**

From the weekly lectures of his son,
Rabbi Israel Abargel shlita

...*~* PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL *~*...

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Biased Hospitality	1
Law-Abiding Lot	6
The Consequence	7
The Source of Sin	8
Comfort	9
Salvation Through Kindness	10
Continued Deterioration	11
The Fig Tree	12
Avraham's Journey	14
Light Up The World	16
Avraham's Disciple	19
Lot's Test	20
Eternal Mistake	21
Priorities In Life	23
True Marriage	26
The Remote	27
<i>The Pathway</i>	29



venmo

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets

Publisher and Distributer of the Teachings of
Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l

- | | |
|--|---|
|  P.O. Box 345, Netivot, 8771301, Israel |  (954) 800-6526 |
|  en@h-l.org.il |  Hameir Laarets |
|  www.hameir-laarets.org.il/en |  HameirLaaretsEN |
|  +972-77-223-1130 |  054-870-8737 |

Message Us to Join Our WhatsApp Groups

Parashat Vayera

Biased Hospitality

Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik zt”l officially served as the head Rabbi of the city of Brisk, but in practice, his authority was accepted throughout numerous communities all over Russia.

Our story occurred during a very difficult year, a year of non-stop snowstorms and cold that penetrated the bones of all that walked the streets.

In the midst of these days, knocking was suddenly heard at the door of Rabbi Yosef’s home...

The rabbi opened the door, and a horseman stood in the doorway, his face white and his lips blue. Without saying a word, he handed the rabbi a rolled-up letter. The rabbi took the letter, opened it, and began to read...

His eyes filled with tears, and every line he read deepened his sorrow. The troubles of the Jews of a certain town took up all the

space of the letter, and at the end, a request, “Please! We need the advice and blessing of the rabbi! We ask that he come to visit us...”

Rabbi Yosef didn’t linger for even a moment. Without taking into account the harsh snowstorms, he immediately hired a wagon driver and set off...

At first, the cold was still bearable, but slowly, as they furthered away from Brisk, the weather began to change... A strong north wind began to blow, followed by convoys of thick clouds...

Lightning and thunder competed among themselves to see who was scarier... Torrents of rain dashed off the horses’ heads as their feet began to get caught in the thick mud...

The wagon driver, who was terrified of getting stuck, swung his whip in the air with great force, and as a result of the loud

Parashat Vayera - Biased Hospitality

whistle, the horses began to gallop at high speeds... However, because of the chaos, they strayed off the trail and got lost...

After the long and arduous journey, they finally arrived, late at night, at a roadside inn in a small town.

Now's the time to point out that when he left the city, Rabbi Yosef was accustomed to remove his official attire and wear clothes like everyone else. And in accordance with his custom, before this trip, he removed his official hat and wore a regular hat like the one customarily worn in the villages of Russia and Lithuania in those days, and even took off his rabbinical robe.

They got out of the wagon and knocked on the door of the inn, but no one answered. The wagon driver then knocked louder with frustration. The innkeeper, who feared that the wagon driver was going to break down the door with the force of his slamming on the door, opened it and angrily informed them that he didn't have a single bed available, "Seven guests are already inside and five more,

who booked accommodation, will be arriving shortly. They were supposed to arrive about an hour and a half ago, but due to the storm, they're running late. I have no place for you. Please leave in peace!"

"How can you just turn us away? We've been on the road, in the heavy rain and terrible cold, for several hours. If you send us on our way, you're putting our lives in real danger. Please let us in just until tomorrow. We'll recuperate and head out in the morning. Hopefully, until then, the storm will subside," beseeched Rabbi Yosef.

After numerous pleas, the innkeeper agreed to let them in on the condition that they sleep on the floor in the hallway. He also allowed the wagon driver to put the horses in the stable. They then prayed *arvit* and went to bed. The wagon driver fell asleep immediately after all the hardships of the road while Rabbi Yosef lit a candle and began to learn.

"Blow out the candle immediately, you're waking our

guests!” shouted the innkeeper, waking up all his guests... Rabbi Yosef blew out the candle without delay and continued to study by heart. His lips moved, but his voice wasn't heard.

After about half an hour, sounds of a carriage parking in the front yard, accompanied by the voices of people speaking with great excitement, were heard. From their conversation, it became clear that they, too, had managed to arrive at the inn with great difficulty due to the severe storm. The innkeeper quickly lit an oil lamp in the dining room as well as in two other rooms and then opened the front door and received his guests with great respect. Rebbe Aharon of Koidanov and four of his chassidim then entered the inn. The innkeeper, his wife, and his son hurried and served the guest and his companion's hot cups of tea, and after warming up and resting a little, Rebbe Aharon got up to wash his hands before *tefillat arvit*.

As he walked down the hall, he suddenly saw the two men lying on

the floor, one sleeping soundly and the other awake. Rebbe Aharon looked at him closely and then realized that sitting on the cold floor was none other than the great Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, the head Rabbi of Brisk!

A fierce tremor passed through his entire body, and he exclaimed with great zeal, “Rabbi Yosef Dov, Rabbi of Brisk, Rabbi Yosef Dov! What's going on here!? Is there no room for his honor to sleep on a bed in this inn?!”

When the innkeeper heard the fervent words of Rebbe Aharon and realized who the guest he initially refused to bring inside and who, out of thoughtlessness and irresponsibility, was even willing to risk his life was, he became panic-struck and ashamed.

Frightened in fear of the resentment of the Rabbi of Brisk, a true Torah giant, and embarrassed by his behavior, he began to quiver. How would he be able to face the Rabbi of Brisk after all he had done to him? He was also ashamed of Rebbe Aharon of

Parashat Vayera - Biased Hospitality

Koidanov, who, if he knew all the details of his hostile reception of the Rabbi of Brisk, would no longer want to stay at his inn.

As he was shaking in fear and shame, the innkeeper approached Rabbi Yosef and asked him to forgive him for his bad treatment toward him, “I didn’t know that you’re the Rabbi of Brisk...”

“**I** don’t forgive you!” Rabbi Yosef sternly informed him. “What do you mean you didn’t take me in because you didn’t recognize me as the Rabbi of Brisk? If I were a chimney cleaner or a water drawer, it would then be fine to risk my life and not let me into your inn?! I don’t forgive you!”

“**Rabbi!** What can I say? How can I justify myself? Have mercy on me and my home and forgive me for my cruel behavior” the innkeeper pleaded.

“**Listen,**” Rabbi Yosef replied, “in the book of Bereshit, in parashat Vayera, the Torah tells us about the exceptional *Hachnasat Orchim* (hospitality) of Avraham Avinu, and *chazal* elaborate on the greatness of his

hospitality and what we must learn from him. In contrast, it’s later told about the *Hachnasat Orchim* of Lot, who risked his life for his guests, yet we don’t find that *chazal* praised him, nor do they mention anything to learn from his *Hachnasat Orchim*.

Moreover, while the angels told Lot that Hashem was going to destroy the city and, therefore, he must hurry and flee, they informed him that he was being saved only in the merit of Avraham and not in his own merit. This is inconceivable! Why wasn’t he saved in the merit of his *mesirut nefesh* for the sake of his guests?!

The answer to this is that when the angels came to Avraham, they appeared to him as human beings, as it says, “He raised his eyes and saw... three men were standing over him” (Bereshit 18:2), whereas when they came to Lot, they appeared to him as angels, as it says, “The two angels arrived in Sedom” (Bereshit 19:1).

Avraham Avinu fulfilled the mitzvah of *Hachnasat Orchim*

with those who seemed to him to be human beings, passers-by. He troubled himself for their sake despite being ill. Whereas Lot, oh Lot, lived near the gate of Sedom and left the deprived outside, but the angels, the *Rabbi's*, he brings in, for he understood that if they're angels, nothing bad will happen to him. On the contrary, only good will come out of it... the next time they arrive, they'll honor him by staying at his home...

Well, that Lot's hospitality...

Thus, the excuse, "I didn't know that the Rabbi of Brisk was my guest," is worse than your behavior...

Therefore, if you want me to forgive you for your depraved behavior towards my wagon driver and me, you must come to Brisk and stay at my house for two weeks !"

The innkeeper looked at the rabbi in astonishment, "If I come to your house for two weeks, you'll forgive me ? !"

"Yes, indeed," the rabbi replied.

For two whole weeks, the innkeeper lodged at Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik's home, not ceasing to look on with awe at how every Jew was received by the rabbi with love...

He observed how the rabbi troubled himself for the sake of every Jew, how he endeavored to find a livelihood for them, and how he supported the needy and generously and wholeheartedly gave of his own money...

It took fourteen days for the innkeeper to purify himself of his past ways, of his heartlessness and indifference, and when he returned home, a completely different person returned.

Since then, he began to devote much of his time to acts of kindness and became famous throughout the district as a righteous and benevolent man...¹

Law-Abiding Lot

The Russian Tsar, during his years of reign, ordered many harsh decrees on the Jews of his region.

Jews weren't allowed to live in St. Petersburg, the capital, except for those who received special permission due to their status. Nevertheless, there were Jews who still desired to reside there, and although they were unable to obtain the coveted authorization, they didn't worry at all, for after all, they lived in Russia! They approached government officials and handed them a few "papers," thus buying themselves peace and quiet in St. Petersburg.

Then, as usual, the troubles began with one Jew named Zussman, who was ashamed of being a Jew, causing himself deep self-hatred to the point of becoming "anti-Semitic." He then began to persecute his Jewish brothers with fierce anger and animosity...

Since he was acquainted with the entire Jewish community in St. Petersburg, he knew about those who bought their rights to live

there and thus went and informed the government on them...

This wicked man once came across Rabbi Itzchak Elchanan Spektor, who knew him before he went astray.

Rabbi Itzchak Elchanan revoked him for his evil deeds. Zussman got angry and said, "Rabbi! You taught us that the law of the country is binding! When I hand over Jews who break the laws of the state to the government, I fulfill my civic duty, and the rabbi knows that I'm an honest person..."

Rabbi Itzchak Elchanan replied, "The Torah says, 'Lot was sitting at the gate of Sedom' (Bereshit 19:1). Rashi comments, 'That same day the community of Sedom appointed him as their judge.' What does Rashi mean when he says, "That same day?"

The answer to this is that in Sedom, there were terrible laws that the public couldn't abide by (as in the Tsar's Russia). Therefore, in order to live there, the inhabitants developed the

Parashat Vayera - The Consequence

method of bribery, and by doing so, they managed to survive...

However, it was suddenly announced in Sedom that a new judge had been appointed to the Supreme Court, and his name was Lot (Zussman)!

And on that same day, life suddenly turned upside down and became unbearable because Lot was educated by Avraham and was an honest man, and he began

to eradicate bribery from the state. Thus, life became unbearable, and they couldn't live even one day under the regime of Sedom!

That's why Rashi says, 'That same day the community of Sedom appointed him as their judge,' for it was impossible to exist in such a regime for more than one day, and in actuality, the very next day, Sedom was overturned...²

The Consequence

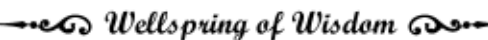
HaRav Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l writes...³

At the end of parashat Lech Lecha, the birth of two people, Avraham and Lot, is recounted. There, the Torah tells us that they were born in the same place and grew up in the same living conditions, and yet, one of them merited becoming renowned in the upper worlds, while the other lost everything.

In this discussion, we'll try to focus on the difference between them...

Before we continue, we'll just point out that the consequences of Lot's behavior were disastrous, for, in the end, Lot was left with nothing!

His entire family (except for his two daughters) perished in the overturning of Sedom and Amorrah, everything he owned



2. Imrot Chochma - Bereshit (p. 127).

3. Yarum VeNisa (Parashat Vayera, Maamar 2).

Parashat Vayera - The Source of Sin

was lost in the fire, and his sinful lusts led him to the terrible disgrace of the birth of Ammon and Moav by his two daughters.

He lost not only this world but the next world as well. After he passed away, he left behind his grandchildren, Ammon and Moav, two filthy, impure nations with depraved characteristics, as expressed in the verse, “Because they didn’t greet you with bread

and water on your journey after you left Egypt” (Devarim 23:5).

Our sacred Torah, the Torah of life, wanted to teach us how to merit true good, eternal good, and thus it tells us about Lot’s deeds, that we’ll contemplate and learn from them and know to be careful and not fall like him...

Let’s start with the generation of the flood...

The Source of Sin

The people of the generation of the flood were extraordinarily wicked... robbery, murder, lewdness... There wasn’t a generation as wicked as them.

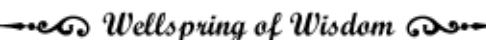
Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler zt”l writes⁴ that although the people of the generation of the flood were corrupt, their primary sin was that they thought only about themselves.

Thoughts come from the power of interest. Thus, whatever doesn’t interest a person, won’t be thought about. When someone

loves themselves excessively, and their own reality fills their entire world, there’s no room to think about the reality of others at all!

This was the reality of the people of the generation of the flood. They were so immersed in themselves and in their thoughts to fulfill their own lusts and desires, to the point that they left no place for the reality of others!

This excessive self-love is what brought about all their terrible sins... theft, abuse, murder... all this was



4. Michtav Me’Eliyahu (Vol. 2, p. 155).

done without feelings of remorse at all, with complete heartlessness towards the grief of the other...

And this is simple, for how can they be aware of the others' sorrow?! The reality of the other didn't even pass their mind, not even in the slightest...

And in the end, they were wiped out from the world...

Not only them, but every person who walked, walks, and will walk the face of the earth, entirely immersed in themselves, while the

other doesn't interest them at all, won't merit longevity, and because of their own selves, alone, they'll disappear from reality.

This is the punishment that is said about the generation of the flood, "Elokim said to Noach: The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with theft because of them, and so, I will destroy them from the earth" (Bereshit 6:13).

"The end of all flesh has come before Me" – by itself it came!

Comfort

In that terrible generation lived a man, different from everyone else, named Noach. Noach was privileged to escape the power of self-love and to truly care about others.

He merited serving Hashem, the Creator of the world, with all his might, as well as thinking about and truly taking an interest in the situations of others, which caused every person who came

his way to feel completely comfortable in his presence.

This is the explanation of what is said, "These are the generations of Noach, Noach" (Bereshit 6:9). The Midrash⁵ explains that the reason the Torah says, "Noach" (which means comfort) twice (for it should've been written, "These are the generations of Noach, Shem etc."), is to teach us that he was perfect in mitzvot

Parashat Vayera - Salvation Through Kindness

between him and Hashem, as well as between him and his fellow.

Because Noach thought about others, truly, Hashem revealed Himself to him and said, “The world is collapsing, on its own. Therefore, I’m bringing a flood upon the world to destroy it. But you’re worthy of remaining alive, thus, make for yourself an ark and enter it...”

Noach fulfilled Hashem’s will and built the ark.

On the 17th of Cheshvan, in the year 1656 from creation, “All

the wellsprings of the great deep burst, and the windows of the heavens opened” (Bereshit 7:11). The world was washed away by endless waves of boiling water... Cruel whirlpools sucked all of reality into them... An abysmal silence prevailed, and only the sound of the wind was heard...

Reality disappeared! No trace of it remained! Thus Shlomo HaMelech says, “There’s no remembrance of earlier ones” (Kohélet 1:11) – This is the generation of the flood, that no trace of them remains!⁶

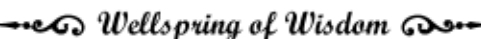
Salvation Through Kindness

For 375 days, all the creatures of the world, plants, animals, and humans, gathered within a wooden ark and floated on endless water.

Throughout that entire time, the trait of judgment stood in heaven and accused, “Master of the world! You created the world, and it disappointed you! You

shouldn’t give it a second chance! Give me permission, and I’ll make a small hole in the ark...”

However, since Noach and his sons constantly performed acts of kindness towards all the creatures that entire time, feeding and tending to each and every animal according to their needs, day and night, for more than



6. Kohélet Rabbah 1:30.

Parashat Vayera - Continued Deterioration

a year, the accusations weren't accepted!

Rabbi Chaim Friedlander writes⁷ that their engagement in kindness is what stood for them in their escape from the punishment of the flood, for it was precisely kindness that was a *tikkun* for the sin of the people of the generation of the flood, the sin of theft and oppression.

Thus, it was necessary for them to live in the ark for an entire year and worry about the existence of all of creation through their kindness, thus saving themselves

from destruction as well as bringing about the *tikkun* for the entire generation.

The kindness of Noach and his sons wasn't limited only to giving but also to knowing the special qualities and needs of each and every animal separately. **This is the perfection of kindness, that a person feels the needs of others and that their giving be accordingly.**⁸ The merit of this perfect kindness brought about the *tikkun* for the sin of the entire generation and provided existence to Noach and to all of creation...

Continued Deterioration

On the 27th of Cheshvan, Noach and his three sons, Shem,

Cham, and Yefet, walked out of the ark and began their restoration of

~ Wellspring of Wisdom ~

7. Siftei Chaim (Vol. 1, p. 279).

8. **Rashi** writes, "The poor person with you" (Shemot 22:24) – See yourself as if you were the poor person.

Indeed, the lender has money, but the Torah requires that the loan be given with perfection, by the one giving feel as if they were the poor person receiving. If they don't feel "the poor person with you," they can't do the kindness with perfection.

In order to perform perfect kindness, one has to enter deep into the feelings of the other, and place themselves in their very situation. In fact, this contains the source of the entire structure of the relationship between a person and their fellow. When one feels "the poor person with you," they achieve the perfection of "You shall love your fellow as yourself."

- Siftei Chaim (Vol. 1, p. 280).

Parashat Vayera - The Fig Tree

the world. Cham had a number of children, one of whom was Cush. Cush had a son who he named Nimrod, “Cush begot Nimrod, and he began to be a mighty man on earth” (Bereshit 10:8).

Rashi sums up Nimrod’s misdeeds as follows...⁹ He deceived the people through his words, misleading them to rebel against Hashem, all with the intention of angering and rebelling against the Creator of the world.

Rabbi Shimshon Hirsch zt”l further explained¹⁰ that Nimrod was a great danger to humanity! During Nimrod’s rule, humanity stood on the brink of the abyss, a hairsbreadth standing between them and destruction.

This wasn’t the case in previous generations. For in

previous generations, before the flood, because of the lawlessness that prevailed in the world, humanity slowly marched to the abyss, and only hundreds of years later, they crossed the threshold, and the flood arrived!

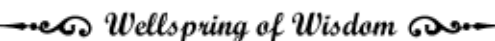
However, the tyrannical rule of Nimrod could’ve obliterated an entire world at once! Because Nimrod was an oppressive ruler, rebelling against Hashem, enacting corrupt, immoral laws, using his power and influence for evil, pouring upon the people a spirit of cruelty and debauchery, and accustoming them to the darkness of ignorance and savagery, the people blindly and ignorantly followed him, falling straight into the deep abyss...

And once again, the world reached a state of repulsion...

The Fig Tree

Hashem desires the *tikkun* of the world, therefore, He chose four souls from whom the

tikkun would begin. Yehoshua bin Nun hinted at this when he said, “Thus said Hashem,



9. Bereshit 10:9.

10. Meitav Higayon (p. 92).

Parashat Vayera - The Fig Tree

Elokei Israel: Your forefathers – Terach, father of Avraham and father of Nachor, lived beyond the Euphrates and worshiped other gods” (Yehoshua 24:2).

The kabbalist, Rabbi Shimshon of Ostropoli zt”l explains¹¹ that *chazal* say¹² that the Tree of Knowledge from which Adam HaRishon ate was a fig tree. And just as the downfall of the world came from a תְּאֵנָה (fig), so too, the beginning of the *tikkun* of the world came from the four souls hinted at in the word "תְּאֵנָה" – תְּרַח (Terach), אַבְרָהָם (Avraham), נַחֲוֹר (Nachor), הָרָן (Haran).

All four of these souls were family.

Shem, the son of Noach, left the ark and settled the land. He begot a son and named him Arpachshad, who begot Shelach, who begot Ever, who begot Peleg, who begot Reu, who begot Serug,

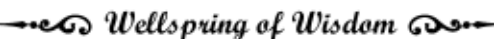
who begot Nachor (the first).

Nachor (the first) grew up and got married, and in the year 1878 from the creation of the world, he begot a son and named him Terach.

Terach married two wives, one whose name was Amatlai, the daughter of Karenvo, and from whom he had two sons, Avraham and Nachor (the second), and one whose name is unknown, from whom Haran was born.¹³

Haran (Avraham’s brother) married a woman whose name is also unknown and had a son and two daughters. They named their son Lot and the two daughters Milka and Iska. *Chazal* revealed¹⁴ to us that Iska is Sarah, and Avraham (Terach’s son) married Sarah (Haran’s daughter)...

Avraham’s brother, Nachor (Terach’s son), married Haran’s



11. Likutei Shoshanim (Likut 24).

12. Sanhedrin 70b.

13. Rashi writes: “But not the daughter of my mother” (Bereshit 20:12) – Haran was born to a different mother than Avraham.

14. Megillah 14a.

Parashat Vayera - Avraham's Journey

daughter, whose name was Milka. They had eight children, Utz, Buz, Kemuel, Kesed, Chazo, Pildash, Idlaf, and Betuel.

Betuel married a woman whose name is unknown, and they had two children, Lavan and Rivka.

Rivka married Itzchak (Avraham's son), and they had twins, Yaakov and Esav.

Lavan (Rivka's brother) married two women, one was his wife, and they had two daughters, Leah and Rachel, and the other

was his concubine, and they had two daughters, Zilpa and Bilha.¹⁵

Yaakov Avinu married all four of Lavan's daughters, Rachel, Leah, Zilpha, and Bilha, and from them, the twelve tribes were born.

It turns out, according to all the above, that the entire nation of Am Israel came from Terach and his sons...

Confused by all the names? Don't worry. We'll focus only on two, Avraham and his nephew Lot...

Avraham's Journey

In the year 1948 from the creation of the world, the soul of Avraham Avinu descended into the world, a soul that intensely longed and yearned for closeness with Hashem.

However, despite his soul's longing and yearning, it wasn't able (at the beginning of its journey) to find its Creator. It began to search, for many days and many years...

As part of its search for the truth, it contemplated all the generations that had passed and understood that when someone is harmful to others, insensitive, cruel, and hurtful (like the people of the generation of the flood), they themselves destroy and eradicate themselves from reality.

However, his restless soul still searched for meaning...

...*~* **Wellspring of Wisdom** *~*...

15. Rashi says: "My daughters... my daughters" (Bereshit 31:50) – "My daughters"

is written twice because Bilha and Zilpa were also his daughters from a concubine.

Then, one day, it met Shem, the son of Noach...

Avraham Avinu approached Shem and said to him, "Shem! You lived in that terrible generation, the generation of the flood, and since your father, Noach, was righteous, Hashem commanded him to build an ark and enter it. But I don't understand. How did you guys exit the ark?"

Shem replied, "In the merit of the *tzedakah* that we did!"

These are the words of the Midrash...¹⁶

"[A psalm] of David. Don't compete with evildoers. Don't envy the doers of wrong" (Tehillim 37:1) – this is what's written, "[My son,] let your heart not envy sinners" (Mishlei 23:17) – Rather what should your heart envy? "Those who fear Hashem the entire day" (ibid.).

If Avraham hadn't been envious of those who did

kindness with others, he wouldn't have been worthy of the heavens and the earth being sustained in his merit. When did he become envious of those who did kindness? When he asked Shem, "How did you guys exit the ark?" Shem replied, "In the merit of the *tzedakah* that we did!" Avraham then asked, "What *tzedakah* did you do in the ark? Were there poor people there with you to do *tzedakah* with them!?" Shem answered, "We did *tzedakah* with the animals. We wouldn't sleep. Rather, we would tend to each animal according to their needs."

Avraham then thought to himself, "They were allowed to leave the ark and have all of humanity descend from them due to the *tzedakah* they did with only animals! If I do *tzedakah* with human beings, how much more so will Hashem take me out of my personal "ark" and privilege me with descendants of a much greater consciousness!" At that moment,

Parashat Vayera - Light Up The World

“Avraham planted an אָשׁל in Beer Sheva” (Bereshit 21:33)...

אָשׁל - אַכּיּלָה שְׁתִּיָּה לִינָה

(a free hostel for eating, drinking, and sleeping).

After the immense power of kindness was revealed to Avraham Avinu, he resolved to serve Hashem through the trait of kindness all the days of his life...

Light Up The World

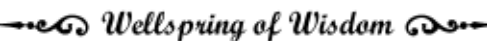
Avraham Avinu dedicated his entire life to doing kindness to Hashem’s creations. And since the greatest kindness that can be done to human beings is to bring them closer to Hashem, he searched for ways to do this. How could he bring down such lofty concepts and explain them to people who’ve never heard of them before ?

But he succeeded ! And thus, he enlightened the world !

HaRav Yoram Michael Abargel zt”l writes¹⁷ that the purpose of lighting the menorah in the Beit Hamikdash was to shine light unto the world. The person most suitable for this holy task was Aharon HaKohen because his

primary trait was the trait of kindness, a good, loving heart, full of the desire to give, and as *chazal* say,¹⁸ “Aharon HaKohen would love peace and pursue peace, love humanity and draw them closer to Torah.” This is what lighting the menorah symbolized, spreading light and kindness.

This is why Aharon HaKohen also merited serving as a channel to draw down blessing on all of Am Israel with the mitzvah to bless them in the *Birkat HaKohanim*. For the impact of the blessing depends on the goodness of the heart and the eye of the blesser, as it says, “[A person with] a good eye יְבִרָה? (is blessed)” (Mishlei 22:9), and *chazal* say¹⁹ that we shouldn’t



17. Imrei Noam (Parashat Behalotecha, Maamar 1).

18. Pirkei Avot 1:12.

19. Sotah 38b.

read it "יְבָרֵךְ" (is blessed), but, "יְבָרֵךְ?" (will bless), that is, has the power to bless. Thus, since Aharon HaKohen excelled in this trait in an extraordinary way, he merited that the key to draw blessing down unto Am Israel be given to him and his descendants after him for eternity.

We meet this trait of a "good heart" later on in the parasha regarding Aharon HaKohen's brother, Moshe Rabbeinu, when Yehoshua told him that Eldad and Maydad were prophesying in the camp and requested to stop their prophesying in Moshe's honor. Moshe Rabbeinu then said to him, "Are you zealous for my sake? May all of Hashem's people be prophets, and that Hashem place His Spirit upon them!" (Bamidbar 11:29). From the goodness of Moshe Rabbeinu's heart, he was happy at the fact that another two Jews merited receiving prophecy. He didn't take it as a slight to his honor in any way. On the contrary, he rejoiced!

Therefore, these two tzaddikim, as well as all the tzaddikim throughout the generations who followed in their path, were blessed by Hashem to perform open miracles, changing all the laws of nature by the decree of their mouths. For the nature of flesh and blood is to care, first and foremost, for themselves, and their primary joy is in their own success.

On the other hand, this aspect of goodness of the heart and one's joy in another's success, as well as the desire to be concerned about others more than oneself, is the very opposite of human nature. And since these tzaddikim merited changing their human nature and attaining the trait of a "good heart" towards others, measure for measure, Hashem gave them the power to change the laws of nature of the world.

According to the above, we can also understand what *chazal* say,²⁰ "Anyone who teaches Torah to the son of someone unlearned,

even if Hashem issues a harsh decree, He nullifies it for his sake.”

That is, naturally, a son continues in the ways of his father, and if the father is unlearned, then his son will be so as well. If so, someone who teaches Torah to the son of someone unlearned and helps him ascend and become a *talmid chacham*, he thus changed nature ! Therefore, his reward, measure for measure, is that Hashem will change the laws of nature according to his decree, and even the decrees of Hashem Himself, he has the power to nullify.

This is the primary *avodah* of every Jew – to remove the evil human nature inherent within oneself, and to develop the sublime trait of a “good heart” towards others, until one rejoices with all their heart in the happiness of the other and is concerned about them just as one is concerned about themselves and even more so, as well as to give others from

what Hashem has given them, as the chassid says, “Mine is yours, and yours is yours.”²¹

In this merit, many blessings will pour down on them just as we find that one who gives *tzedakah* to the poor and encourages and brings them joy from their good and merciful heart is blessed abundantly.

We find an allusion to this in the verse, “The act of *tzedakah* shall be peace and the *avodah* of *tzedakah*, serenity and sureness forever” (Yeshayahu 32:17) – This verse speaks of the reward of *tzedakah* and *chesed* to others. The source of the verse is the book of Yeshayahu, chapter לב (32), verse יז (17), which alludes to the trait of a “good heart” (chapter לב – the word לֵב meaning “heart,” verse יז – which is the gematria of the word טוֹב meaning “good”), and as a result of this trait, a person will merit an abundance of blessing...

Let’s get back to Avraham Avinu...

Avraham's Disciple

One of Avraham Avinu's most devout disciples was his nephew, Lot. Throughout the lengthy path of searching and acts of kindness that Avraham walked, his nephew Lot always accompanied him, never leaving his side.

Lot accompanied Avraham when he was thrown into the fiery furnace and also watched the shocking event of his father, Haran, who didn't stand strong in his *emuna* in Hashem, being burned alive... And yet, Lot continued clinging to his rabbi, Avraham, with all his might...

Avraham Avinu, as we know, was tested with ten difficult tests, and the more difficult the test, the more the Torah explicitly states it. Thus, the test of Ur Kasdim is only alluded to in the Torah, whereas the test of "Lech Lecha" is told in much greater detail.

The test of exile is one of the hardest there is. Not every person

is able to endure it. Hashem commanded Avraham to go "from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house" (Bereshit 12:1), which is a very difficult test for any person.

Lot, who left with Avraham, inevitably experienced the same test as well. He also set out from his birthplace, and not as Avraham's servant but rather as his disciple. He left of his own free will. If so, why doesn't the Torah mention, or even allude, to the fact that Lot joined this great test?

Inevitably you must say that concerning Lot, it wasn't a test at all, for he clung to Avraham Avinu to the extent of feeling, "anyone who parts from you, it's as though he's parted from life itself,"²² thus he felt no test whatsoever.

The Torah states that someone who unintentionally kills a Jew must be exiled to a

Parashat Vayera - Lot's Test

city of refuge, and if they were a student studying in a yeshiva, their rabbi must also go into exile with them.

The reason for this is because it's written, "Then Moshe set aside three cities across the Yarden towards the rising sun for one who unintentionally killed his fellow, not having hated him previously; he shall flee to one of these cities, and he shall **live**" – The meaning of this is that one who unintentionally kills someone must **live** in a city of refuge, and if you remove the student from his rabbi, you killed him!

The concept of "תלמיד" (disciple) is very a lofty concept. Not every person who desires it can achieve it! A תלמיד is one whose soul wholly yearns to receive from its rabbi!

Lot's Test

Avraham and Lot settled in Eretz Israel, the Holy Land, where the revelation of *Elokut* shines constantly.

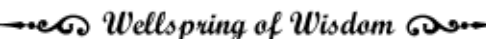
Lot was a true disciple! Therefore, it wasn't a test for Lot at all!

Lot went with Avraham and learned from him like a true disciple, and he truly managed to absorb the spirit of his rabbi, Avraham. Like Avraham, he also excelled in the trait of kindness with real self-sacrifice in his stay in Sedom. He was ready to sacrifice everything for *Hachnasat Orchim*. The Torah also says, "Lot, who accompanied Avram, also had sheep, cattle, and tents" (Bereshit 13:5). He also merited greatness and wealth by being close to Avraham...²³

And in the year 2023 from the creation of the world, when Avraham Avinu was 75 years old, he arrived with Lot in Eretz Israel...

And there, Lot's lust for money awakened!

Lot, who merited growing up in Avraham's midst, who was



23. Lev Aharon (p. 89) by Rabbi Aharon Yosef Baksht zt"l.

full of kindness, lifting up others, generosity, giving, giving, and more giving, suddenly fell into the deepest swamp in the world...
the lust for money!

This lust caused him to dispute with and shame Avraham and, ultimately, to leave him and go live in Sedom, the capital of the misers!

This is how things unfolded...

Lot had a lot of livestock, and they needed to eat. Rather than carrying out the simplest task one can do in the situation – buying hay for them, he sent them to graze in other people’s fields, without permission, of course!

When Avraham’s herdsmen asked Lot’s herdsmen, “Why are

you guys stealing?!” Lot’s herdsmen answered them, “*Chas ve’shalom!* Us?! Thieves?! No way! Hashem gave this land to the descendants of Avraham, Lot’s uncle, but Avraham doesn’t have children to inherit him. Thus, Lot will eventually inherit the entire land, so it’s considered as if the land is already his!”

Avraham’s herdsmen replied, “True, Hashem promised, but since the time for that promise to be fulfilled has yet to come, you guys are stealing!”

The dispute between them grew stronger. Lot eventually joined the dispute and began opposing and disgracing Avraham...

Eternal Mistake

At first, Lot was blessed! He merited being close to a great tzaddik, one for whose sake the world was created!

Avraham paved him the path that he should walk all his life. But Lot, oh Lot, couldn’t control his desires, and therefore

he began to scorn and slander Avraham, non-stop...

When Avraham noticed Lot’s inconsistency, his instability, and his disdainful attitude, he lost all faith in him. Thus he requested of him, “The entire land is before you! Please part from me. If you

go left, I'll go right, and if you go right, I'll go left" (Bereshit 13:9).

A vital point must be clarified here – where did such an abnormal characteristic of ungratefulness come from ?

The answer is that Lot symbolizes someone in whom light and darkness are mixed. On the one hand, he grew up in the midst of a tzaddik, but on the other hand, he strayed from his righteous path. On the one hand, he hosted the angels with real *mesirut nefesh*, but on the other hand, he became a judge according to the laws of Sedom. On the one hand, he prevented the people of Sedom from harming his guests, but on the other hand, he was willing to hand over his two daughters to them...

Someone in whom light and darkness are mixed to such a drastic extent has no hope ! Even when they're in the light, the darkness slowly pulls them back.

Someone who grew up for many years in the presence of a tzaddik who was full of kindness,

and was able to not only part from him, but to stray to the other side, is whom the prophet cries out about, saying, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who present darkness as light and light as darkness, who present bitter as sweet and sweet as bitter ! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, who are clever in their own minds ! Woe to those who are "mighty" drinkers of wine and so valiant in pouring liquor ! Who vindicate the wicked for a bribe, and withhold vindication from the righteous" (Yeshayahu 5:20-23).

It's no wonder that the end of the prophecy was fulfilled regarding Lot... "Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours straw, and chaff shrivels in the flame, so their root shall become rotten, and their flowers shall go up like dust for they have spurned the Torah of Hashem of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel" (Yeshayahu 5:24). And indeed, in the end, Lot was left with nothing !

Thus the Gemara asks²⁴ what the meaning of the verse, "A

brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, and their conflicts are like the barriers of a castle” (Mishlei 18:19) is, and answers...

“**A** brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city,” this is Lot who parted from Avraham. “And their conflicts are like the barriers of a castle,” this is because Lot caused conflict between Avraham’s descendants and his own descendants, like barriers that lock the gates of a castle. Just as no one can enter a locked castle, so too, Lot’s descendants, Ammon and Moav, were prevented from joining Am Israel, as it says, “Neither an Ammoni nor a Moavi may enter the congregation of Hashem” (Devarim 23:4).

Furthermore, the Gemara asks what the meaning of the verse, “He who separates himself seeks lust, and in all wisdom, he is exposed” (Mishlei 18:1) is, and answers...

“**He** who separates himself seeks lust,” this is Lot, who separated from Avraham. “And in all wisdom, he is exposed,” as his shame was eventually exposed in the synagogues and study halls, when the Halachot of his descendants are taught, as we learned in the Mishna:²⁵ An Ammoni and a Moavi are prohibited from entering the congregation (Am Israel), and their prohibition is eternal.

Let’s connect this to our daily lives...

Priorities In Life

Hashem created His world with wonderful wisdom in such a way that everything that exists is arranged in a precise order.

One of the brilliant systems that Hashem created in His world

is that of marriage. He created a pair of souls, the soul of a man and the soul of a woman, who are an identical match, and with the ability to achieve true union between them !

However, even after they unite by marrying according to the law of Moshe and Israel, there are still some basic rules required to make the union last.

The most basic rule is – trust !

Each of the spouses should know that, no matter what, it's absolutely forbidden to lose their spouse's trust.

HaRav Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l once said that someone who was once wealthy and then lost all their assets has nothing to worry about. With Hashem's help, the situation they're in now isn't a lost cause. Hashem will open the gates of abundance for them in a different way, and they'll eventually become rich again, and maybe even more than they were before.

Someone who was elected mayor of their city by a vast majority, and in the elections held five years later, they were kicked out by a vast majority, don't worry, Hashem will lift them up, and whoever didn't want them when they were "small," will receive them when they're "big."

For every loss in life, our natural feeling should be, "It's all good!" Except when one loses trust... When someone loses trust, they lose an entire world... they lose life and enter troubles...

A man has a good wife – he must place her at the forefront of his mind. A woman has a good husband – she must feel that her whole world contains only Hashem in heaven and her husband on earth.

This is so important in Hashem's eyes that he exempted the married woman from the mitzvah of honoring her parents. Although this is one of the most important mitzvot of the Torah, the relationship with her husband is more important.

Unfortunately, we live in the twilight of exile, at the end of the control of the darkness of the exile and at the beginning of the sparks of the light of redemption, and this mix of light and darkness creates a terrible whirlwind of emotions, most of the world losing clarity...

If they would lose clarity of understanding only in abstract,

sublime matters, it wouldn't be such a big problem, but the reality is that they lose clarity of their own lives, in the building of the genuine connection with their spouse and children...

Not too long ago, I received a letter in which the following question was written...

My husband is a boss in one of the factories in Israel, and in order to get to work on time, he prays in the first *minyana*, returns home, puts on *tefillin*, and then goes to work. I don't always have enough time to pray and prepare food for him, so I frequently encounter a problem, I have time to either pray or prepare breakfast for my husband. I wanted to ask the Rav if it's okay to prepare breakfast for my husband before I pray.

I replied to her that she should prepare food for her husband, and then if she still had time, she should pray.

But she apparently asked the question only to hear what she wanted to hear, so she didn't accept my response. She sent another letter asking, "Why should I put my

husband before Hashem? No way!
First prayer, then my husband!"

There are those who've gone even further, and apart from *shacharit*, they make sure to read *Perek Shira*, *Shir HaShirim*, and the entire book of Tehillim... every day...

And her husband, who returns home in the evening exhausted from work, finds an "angel," whose mouth is still muttering the last verses of the book of Tehillim, in front of him, and since she's super careful not to speak in the middle of reciting the verses, she signals to him with her mouth, "Mm..mm..mm..."
What are you in the bathroom...?

Such a woman should know that she's lost her life, the creation of a true and heartfelt relationship with her husband, and all the actions that she does that prevent her from creating this relationship, have absolutely no meaning... She should know that after a long life, when she reaches heaven, she'll be taken with her book of Tehillim and with all her *segulot* and be bound together with them and be thrown into the fire...

Parashat Vayera - True Marriage

Who needs these things?! Where in the 613 mitzvot does it mention that there's a mitzvah for a woman to read Tehillim? True, it's a great virtue, it's important, but there are priorities in life!

Just as a woman should know that there are priorities, that her husband is before everything! Likewise, the husband must know that there are priorities and that his wife is before everything!

You were once single, neglected, and without a real life, and Baruch Hashem, you merited marrying a wonderful woman and building a home. You should know that your wife is before everything!

The seventeenth parasha of the Torah is parashat Yitro. There, the most exalted event that ever occurred on earth is recounted – the Giving of the Torah and the Ten Commandments. The fifth commandment is, “Honor your

father and your mother” (Shemot 20:12).

This mitzvah was only stated in the seventeenth parasha. On the other hand, in the first parasha of the Torah, parashat Bereshit, it's stated, “Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother, and cling to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Bereshit 2:24).

Until a man gets married, until he reaches the stage of having a wife, he's under the authority of his father and mother. Because he married and took a wife, he leaves his father's and mother's authority and unites mentally and spiritually with his wife. From now on, you must know – Hashem in heaven and her on earth!

There's nothing in the world like parents, and they must be respected, but your wife comes first! That's what the Torah states, and that's what Hashem wants!

True Marriage

Every Jewish man and woman merits starting their married life off on the right foot. But the real work is to make sure that it always remains healthy.

A man who always puts his wife before the entire world, and a woman who always puts her husband before the entire world and above the entire world (because even

Parashat Vayera - The Remote

after marriage, the husband is still obligated in the mitzvah to honor his parents while the wife is exempt) manage to establish a healthy marriage.

One of the things that indicate a healthy marriage is the happiness of a woman when she's at home. A man, a good husband, who knows how to compliment his wife, who knows how to be alert and attentive when needed, succeeds in satisfying his wife's feelings, and since she's satisfied, she doesn't search for anything outside. Her soul doesn't need anything else...

But, when a husband doesn't compliment her, nor truly listen to and understand her, his wife feels an emotional need to leave the house, sometimes it's called "shopping," sometimes it's called "vacation," "to breathe some air," "a change of atmosphere," all kinds of outings and attractions... And when they finally go on a

trip together, it doesn't help, the "atmosphere" of the home follows them wherever they go...

An "atmosphere" isn't found outside! An "atmosphere" is created at home!

In order to create such an atmosphere, both spouses need to invest. The one who's better at expressing positive feelings should invest more... in developing a conversation, complimenting, etc., until the hearts of the two unite.

After a couple builds such a system of true devotion... that one breathes the other... even if geographically they're ten thousand miles away from each other, it won't separate them. They'll feel a spiritual connection between them as if they were right next to each other! That's true marriage!

Back to Avraham Avinu...

The Remote

Avraham Avinu, despite all the tests, difficulties, and disappointments he experienced, firmly and consistently continued on his path.

Thus, for 99 years, he purified and sanctified himself and strove to ascend.

Then, Hashem revealed Himself to him and commanded

Parashat Vayera - The Remote

him regarding the *brit milah*.

After the *brit*, Avraham Avinu elevated thousands of levels higher, and was then worthy to receive the Shechina while standing, for, before the *brit*, when Hashem spoke to him, it says, “Avram fell on his face” (Bereshit 17:3).

The difference between the revelation of Shechina that Avraham merited before the *brit* and the revelation of Shechina that he merited after the *brit* was enormous!

Before the *brit*, Avraham received the revelation of the Shechina in a dimmed, shrouded way. But after the *brit*, he received the revelation of the Shechina in a much more vivid, concentrated way. Avraham was much more alert. He could sit and stand as if speaking to a friend. Moreover, he had control over the revelation!

An example of this is like someone holding a remote for the air conditioner. If they want, they can turn it on, and if they want, they can turn it off. They

can raise the temperature, lower the temperature, increase the speed, decrease the speed...

There are tzaddikim who enter a level of *ruach hakodesh*, a level of “seeing,” that they can control.

Like buying a house. You have to go through an entire procedure, but afterward, you receive a key. The moment you get the key, no one can tell you not to enter the house. You enter as you wish, walk up the stairs, go from room to room...

Someone who sanctifies themselves from below and merits overcoming their desires, controlling their thoughts, and ruling their mind over their heart – Hashem doesn’t remain indebted to them. They lose momentary pleasures, but they gain eternal pleasures. They receive a “remote” in their hands. But this time, it’s not for an air conditioner but rather for the entrance to *ruach hakodesh*. To paths unfamiliar to most of humanity, and about this type of person it’s said, “I have seen *Bnei Aliyah* (those who strive to ascend), but they are few.”

The Pathway...

1. Hashem created His world with wonderful wisdom in such a way that everything that exists is arranged in a precise order. One of the brilliant systems that Hashem created in His world is that of marriage. He created a pair of souls, the soul of a man and the soul of a woman, who are an identical match, and with the ability to achieve true union between them!

2. However, even after they unite by marrying according to the law of Moshe and Israel, there are still some basic rules required to make the union last. The most basic rule is – trust!

3. Each of the spouses should know that, no matter what, it's absolutely forbidden to lose their spouse's trust. For every loss in life, our natural feeling should be, "It's all good!" Except when one loses trust... When someone loses trust, they lose an entire world... they lose life and enter troubles...

4. A man has a good wife – he must place her at the forefront of his mind. A woman has a good husband – she must feel that her whole world contains only Hashem in heaven and her husband on earth. This is so important in Hashem's eyes that he exempted the married woman from the mitzvah of honoring her parents.

Although this is one of the most important mitzvot of the Torah, the relationship with her husband is more important.

5. Unfortunately, we live in the twilight of exile, at the end of the control of the darkness of the exile and at the beginning of the sparks of the light of redemption, and this mix of light and darkness creates a terrible whirlwind of emotions, most of the world losing clarity. If a couple would lose clarity of understanding only in abstract, sublime matters, it wouldn't be such a big problem, but the reality is that they lose clarity of their own lives, in the building of the genuine connection with their spouse and children.

6. Just as a woman should know that there are priorities, that her husband is before everything! Likewise, the husband must know that there are priorities and that his wife is before everything!

7. You were once single, neglected, and without a real life, and Baruch Hashem, you merited marrying a wonderful woman and building a home. You should know that your wife is before everything! Your wife comes first! That's what the Torah states, and that's what Hashem wants!

Free distribution

Preserve publication sanctity
by use of Genizah



Shabbat Times Vayera

18th of Cheshvan , 5783

City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	4:23 pm	5:24pm	5:53 pm
Miami	5:15 pm	6:09 pm	6:46 pm
Los Angeles	4:33 pm	5:31 pm	6:04 pm
Montreal	4:10 pm	5:15 pm	5:40 pm
Toronto	4:38 pm	5:41 pm	6:08 pm
London	4:01 pm	5:10 pm	5:28 pm
Jerusalem	4:27 pm	5:16 pm	5:51 pm
Tel Aviv	4:23 pm	5:12 pm	5:46 pm
Haifa	4:21 pm	5:10 pm	5:44 pm
Be'er Sheva	4:24 pm	5:14 pm	5:48 pm

Pathways to the Heart

*From the Words of
HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l*

It's not enough just to hear a child say "I'm going to a friend's house. "A parent has to know who the friend is and how they act. Not every place can a child go...

We have to learn from Yaakov Avinu who said to Yosef, "Go and check up on your brothers." Yaakov Avinu wanted to convey an important message to us – You have to check up on your children everyday.



Become a Partner!

For Donations:

American Friends of Netivot Inc

Account # 1504470357

Signature Bank

261 Madison Avenue New York, NY 10016

Routing # 026013576

Or Visit Our Website

RECOGNIZED BY THE IRS AS A 501(C)(3)
TAX DEDUCTIBLE ORGANIZATION



Do You Enjoy Mesillot?

Want Pathways to the Soul
in Your Synagogue?

Receive Mesillot Weekly Anywhere In The World!

- Free of Charge -

Join Now!



Ask The Rabbi!



Media

www.hameir-laarets.org.il/en

Hameir Laarets

(954) 800-6526

054-870-8737

en@h-l.org.il

