

can “live” one more hour. Napoleon said, “Every moment that I am awake I can bask in the glory of being the king, but, when I sleep, I lose the experience. What a shame to miss it!” Certainly, one must get his rest to function properly. There is a concept, however, of squandering away life. Time is life. It was given to us to serve Hashem and fulfill our mission in the world. If this notion would be coursing through our minds in the morning when the alarm rings, we would race to *shul* with excitement. People that have nowhere to go and nothing to do tend to sleep a lot. Sleep becomes their escape from the reality of life. Someone who is excited about living, about serving, about doing and achieving, cannot wait to get up and go.

**וישב אברהם אל נעריו... וישב אברהם בבאר שבע  
Avraham returned to his young men... and Avraham  
stayed at Be'er Sheva. (22:19)**

Avraham *Avinu* returned home – with his two aides – but where was Yitzchak *Avinu*? Four people left for the mountain; three returned home. Yitzchak must have taken a different route. The *Midrash Rabbah* explains that Yitzchak took a detour to study Torah in the *yeshivah* of Shem (son of Noach). *Targum Yonasan* adds that Yitzchak studied there for three years, until he met Rivkah *Imeinu*. Was something wrong with Avraham’s *yeshivah*? It seems to have sufficed for thirty-seven years. Why did he change? Certainly Shem was not a better *rebbe* than Avraham.

*Horav Moshe Neriyah, zl*, quotes the *Rambam*, who describes Avraham’s methodology of teaching the masses. As opposed to that of Shem, who secluded himself in a corner and taught only the *yechidei segulah*, special students, cherished few, whose acumen, desire and spiritual plateau were all on a level far above the average student, Avraham believed in outreach: every person must be taught that there was a Creator, Who was the G-d of Creation and the G-d of history. It was this approach to Torah which he infused in Yitzchak – up until they left for *Har HaMoriah*, for (literally) what was to be the seminal experience of a lifetime. On *Har HaMoriah*, Yitzchak evinced such an unparalleled display of faith in the Almighty that he could no longer have him return to his original environment. He was now on such a sublime spiritual plane that he had to be secluded away from everyone. Yitzchak would carry on Avraham’s legacy, to reach out to those who were unaffiliated, but it could no longer be a project in which he would circulate among the masses and be exposed to all sorts of individuals, some of whom would detract from his unique spiritual plateau.

Thus, he was compelled to “switch *yeshivos*” to alter his focus from *ahavah*, love, and *chesed*, kindness, which personified Avraham’s home and service to Hashem, to a *yeshivah* where the primary focus was on *yirah*, fear/awe, in order to nurture the *pachad Yitzchak*, fear of Yitzchak. *Pachad Yitzchak* was the *middah*, character trait, which best described our second Patriarch.

When Yitzchak met Rivkah, he was coming directly from three years of non-stop learning with no exposure to society. This learning experience came on the heels of an

*Akeidah*, Binding of Yitzchak, which set the tone and standard for his ultimate devotion to Hashem. This is how Yitzchak began his married life. Is it any wonder that what concerned him most in seeking a wife was replacing his mother, filling the spiritual void left by her passing?

*Va’ani Tefillah*

**הזאת – Bareich aleinu... את השנה הזאת  
es ha’shanah ha’zos. Bless upon us... this year.**

We begin the prayer for sustenance with the acknowledgement that everything – every penny – comes from Hashem. Indeed, one who does not acknowledge Hashem’s complete control over his livelihood takes the chance, when things do not go his way, of engaging in illicit behaviors, even acts of perjury and theft. One who trusts in Hashem knows that he will earn whatever Hashem wants him to earn: no more; no less. Now, when we begin our day with the realization that all of our blessings are Heaven-sent, and that what we will earn is specifically the product of Hashem’s decree, one will not endanger this blessing by doing anything inappropriate or dishonest. He will do everything possible to see these blessings channeled to him in the most appropriate manner. If Hashem provides, then not working on *Shabbos* is a no-brainer. Why would one desecrate Hashem’s gift to him, if he knows that his sustenance is decided by Hashem? Therefore, honesty, integrity, proper dealings in business, all boil down to one thing: Does one believe in Hashem?

**Dedicated in loving memory of our dear**

*father and grandfather*

**Arthur I. Genshaft**

יצחק בן נחום ישראל ז"ל

נפטר חי' חשון תשל"ט

**Neil and Marie Genshaft**

Peninim is published weekly by *Peninim Publications* in conjunction with the *Hebrew Academy of Cleveland*, 1860 S. Taylor Rd. Cleveland, Ohio 44118

©All rights reserved – prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum

For a yearly subscription or Parsha sponsorship, please contact:

In Cleveland – Rabbi L. Scheinbaum (216) 321-5838 Ext. 165

Outside of North America – E. Goldberg +972 2-569 5185

Visit us at:  
<http://www.hac1.org>



**Parashas Vayeira**

**תשע"ה**

**פרשת וירא**

**ויאמרו אליו איה שרה ואמר הנה באה  
They said to him, “Where is Sarah your wife?” and he  
said, “Behold! She is in the tent.” (18:9)**

Three angels, disguised as Arabs, were welcomed by Avraham *Avinu* to his tent. After “partaking” of a luscious and satiating meal, the angels prepared for their real mission: to inform Avraham and Sarah *Imeinu* that they would soon be the progenitors of the next Patriarch. The angels inquired about Sarah’s whereabouts, to which Avraham answered, “She is in the tent.” *Rashi* explains that the angels were quite aware that Sarah was in the tent. The intent of their query was merely to endear Sarah to Avraham by underscoring the fact that she was a *tznuah*, a modest/chaste woman. Avraham’s vocalization of Sarah’s qualities would enhance his appreciation of her. Interestingly, we observe that the one quality which impressed Avraham was the *middah*, attribute, of *tznius*. I think this serves as a paradigm for marriage: a husband is (should be) proud when his wife is lauded for her adherence to the laws concerning *tznius*.

*Chazal (Yoma 47a)* relate that Kimchis had seven sons who served in the position of *Kohen Gadol*. When questioned by the *Chachamim*, Sages, what she did to merit such a great reward, she replied, “In all my days, the beams of my house did not see the braids of my hair.” [This is not a discourse on *halachah*. *Chazal* imply that Kimchis’ act of *tznius* was an act of piety, going beyond the letter of the law. This is, indeed, the opinion of many *poskim*, *Halachic* decisors. There are those, however, who rule otherwise, making it mandatory to cover one’s hair even in the privacy of one’s home. The purpose of this citation is simply to underscore the overriding importance of *tznius* in Jewish society and especially in the Jewish home.] Interestingly, *Kehunah Gedolah*, High Priesthood, is a position which is a legacy that is usually extended to the children of those in that position and to every generation thereafter. *Tznius* affects generations, leaving its mark not only on the present, but on the future as well.

Why was Kimchis blessed with *Kohanim Gedolim*? What connection is there between *Kehunah Gedolah* and *tznius*? The *Kohen Gadol* performs his greatest service to Hashem, and on behalf of *Klal Yisrael* in the most private realm of *kedushah*, sanctity: the *Kodesh HaKedoshim*, Holy of Holies. Nobody sees him, because nobody is granted entrance. Indeed, only the *Kohen Gadol* enters, once a year, on *Yom Kippur*. This is the epitome of *tznius*, which extends beyond our collective dress code. *Tznius* is a vital part of the Torah lifestyle, demanding modesty in all aspects of behavior. Hashem is everywhere: in everything we do, in every area of our lives. Our moral modesty allows us to have greater access to Him. The “smaller” we make ourselves, the more room we provide for

Him.

*Horav Shlomo Wolbe, zl*, makes an insightful observation. *Chazal* teach that Avraham was twenty-five years old when he married Sarah. When the angels paid their visit, the couple had been married just about seventy-five years! Endearing a wife to her husband would seem appropriate, perhaps even necessary, when they are a young couple, commencing the journey of married life – but not for a couple about to celebrate their seventy-fifth wedding anniversary!

The *Mashgiach* derives from here a powerful lesson: the closer the relationship between two people, the greater is their difficulty in showing and articulating the appreciation they have for one another. [After time, the pair become so used to one another and each one’s contributions to the relationship that they begin to expect it.] Each party expects his/her spouse to give it his/her all. After all, it is his/her “obligation.” Thus, when one fails to deliver, to provide, is late, or lacks enthusiasm, the relationship becomes damaged.

The *Sifri* teaches: “*Chesed* begins with those who are closest to us, and then spreads to encompass our neighbors, until we reach out to the entire world. Jewish law demands that a man be as concerned about his wife as he is about himself. Indeed, it is only when each member of a married couple is concerned for the other that happiness reigns in their home, in their lives.” In other words, the most critical component of a happy marriage – and, by extension, a happy home – is *chesed*. The institution of marriage begins with *chesed*, because each one, husband and wife, is obligated to shift focus from him/herself to his/her spouse.

The *Mashgiach* explains that, regardless of the husband’s avenue of *parnassah*, livelihood – whether he is gainfully employed, or he is learning full-time in *Kollel* – he spends his days toiling to deliver sustenance – be it material or spiritual – into the home. The wife spends her days working – either within the home or outside of it; plus, she cares for and raises the children. Each member of the marriage unit, husband and wife, should show his/her spouse appreciation for everything that he/she does. If we would only focus on the many positive contributions of the spouse, instead of the one thing or time that something was not done, we would have a better, more sustainable relationship. Unfortunately, some people, by their very nature, always note what was not done and make the effort to harp on it all of the time. If the angels felt it necessary to endear Sarah to Avraham – after seventy-five years of marriage – we may be certain that acknowledgment and appreciation of a spouse’s qualities and contributions are crucial to a good marriage – regardless how long one has been married.

Furthermore, parents should view themselves as transmitters of the *mesorah*, the Torah tradition from *Sinai*. As such, their preoccupation should be focused, not on material gain,

but on a nurturing, calm, happy home which fosters Torah adherence. If both partners in the marriage focus on these aspects, not only will they succeed in providing the perfect background for their children’s education, they will also have a much happier home life. Happy parents set the tone of the home. Children growing up in a happy home are themselves happy; thus, they are able to grow spiritually – which is really what Judaism is all about: raising spiritually astute children. When a spiritual breakdown occurs, it manifests itself in the emotional, ethical and moral development of the children.

### ונברכו בו כל גווי הארץ

#### And all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by him. (18:18)

All the nations shall bless themselves through Avraham *Avinu*, and, by extension, his descendants – *Klal Yisrael*. Avraham set the standard for the world population to emulate – so should we. Previously, in *Parashas Lech Lecha* (12.2), Hashem told Avraham, *V’heyei brachah*; “And you shall be a blessing.” You will have the power to bless whomever you wish (*Rashi*). *Ramban* interprets this to mean that Avraham will be the standard by which people will bless themselves. Indeed, this is a powerful and frightening mandate for us – as his descendants. We must live up to our responsibility to set the standard for people with whom we come in contact, to say, “I want to be like him/her.” Can one begin to imagine the *chillul Hashem*, desecration of Hashem’s Name, when we do not live up to this standard or, worse, profane it?”

*V’heyei brachah* (ibid 12:2): “Hashem told Avraham, “It is not proper *kavad*, dignity, for Me to bless My creations. Thus, I designate you as my agent to bless people. When someone approaches you for a blessing, I will bless whom you bless (if he/she is worthy of blessing, then he/she will have My blessing). The following story, which took place in September, 2001, is a classic example of the efficacy of a Jew’s blessing. The names have been changed; the story was not.

Mr. and Mrs. Green were remodeling their Boro Park apartment. Anyone who has gone through the turmoil of construction has an idea of the aggravation that accompanies such an undertaking. The schedule is always extended; the dust and soot are everywhere; the lack of privacy makes it into an emotionally-straining experience. Therefore, if something can be done to shorten the job, to ease some of the “pain,” even if it means spending more money than was previously agreed upon, people will agree to do it. In this case, the contractor told Mr. Green that, if he were to be paid a cash advance (not more money – just a timely cash payment), he might be able to “encourage” his workers to spend more time on this site and finish it sooner. Twenty-thousand was the agreed upon amount. Mr. Green asked his wife to please go to the bank and withdraw \$20,000 in cash – which she did. The money was sealed in an envelope, and Mrs. Green decided to “visit” a couple of the stores on the avenue, being that *Yom Tov* would soon be upon them and she needed a “few” things.

After a few hours of shopping, Mrs. Green came home and was immediately greeted by her husband, “Where is the money?” She looked in her purse, and, after practically taking it apart, conceded that the envelope with the money had disappeared. One need not describe Mr. Green’s reaction to his wife’s decision to stop to shop for a few hours with \$20,000 in her purse. She began to retrace her steps, store to store, and finally came to the realization that the envelope must have

disappeared somewhere in the shopping center area – exactly where, she was clueless.

The family resorted to the only avenue left for them: *Tehillim*. They all sat down to pray to Hashem that He open their eyes to the envelope’s location. Suddenly, the phone rang and Mr. Green rose up answer it. “Hello,” he said. “Hi. Is this the Green household?” an accented voice on the other end of the line asked. “Yes, it is,” was Mr. Green’s response. “Are you Mr. Green?” the voice asked. “Yes, I am.” “I wonder if you might have lost an envelope,” the (male) voice asked. “Yes! Yes! I did!” was Mr. Green’s excited reply. After hearing the details of its contents, the man who had called, who gave his name as William, said, “I will be over shortly.”

An hour elapsed, and there was a knock at the door. Mr. Green hurriedly opened the door to greet the face behind the voice, the wonderful person who had put integrity and human decency over avarice and, in most instances, human nature. Before him stood a young, twenty- something, African American man (actually from Jamaica, which explains the accent), holding their envelope filled with cash.

“Come in! Come in!” Mr. Green said. William entered their home and gave Mr. Green the envelope. “Please, wait a moment,” Mr. Green said, as went into his study to count the money. It was intact! All \$20,000 was there, untouched. He could not believe it. In today’s day and age, to find an envelope filled with cash, and to return it, was in and of itself amazing, but to return all of the money was even more startling. “Please, let me give you a reward,” Mr. Green said. “No, no, I could never take a gift for doing what is right,” William replied. “Please, I insist,” said Mr. Green. “You saved our day. We owe you.”

“Fine,” replied William. “I assume that you are Jewish. My mother always reiterated to me that the Jewish People have the power to confer blessings. I would like you to bless me. That will be my reward.” Mr. Green immediately bestowed upon William every blessing that came to mind: joy; long life; health; and the works. He was only too happy to proffer blessings on this wonderful man. They bid each other good-day, and William left. End of the story? Not quite.

William came home, and, to his wife’s chagrin, he was doubled over in pain. “What happened?” she asked. He described his experience, from finding the envelope, to returning it, and the special reward that he had received. Meanwhile, he was sweating profusely and in agony. “Some blessing the Jews gave you,” his wife said, looking at her husband. “This must be the Jewish version of a blessing,” she said, tauntingly. “I am going to call the doctor. You are not well.”

“You are wrong,” William cried, in bitter pain. “My mother told me that a Jew has the power of blessing. I do not believe that my pain is the result of that blessing.” His wife called the doctor, who said he unfortunately could not make a house call that night. He prescribed pain meds and agreed to see William first thing in the morning. “But I must go to work,” William said. “You are in no condition to go to work,” the doctor said. “It appears that you have some form of stomach bug. Go to bed, and I will see you in the morning.”

William was upset. He never missed work, but, obviously, in his present condition, he could not even climb the stairs to the subway, let alone put in a day’s work. It was a long, painful night. William was in pain, sweating, and throwing up. He could hardly get out of bed in the morning. His wife, meanwhile, had given his illness her own diagnosis: “Jew’s blessing.” Usually, William was at his job by 8:30 in the morning.

That day, his wife drove him to the doctor at 9:00 a.m. While they were driving and listening to the news, they heard the announcer shakingly break into the program with breaking news: “A large jet has crashed into the Twin Towers in what appears to be an act of terrorism against the United States!”

Hearing this terrible news, William and his wife were shocked, so shocked that his wife pulled over to the side of the road to collect her emotions. You see: William worked on the 89<sup>th</sup> floor of one of the towers. Had he been at work, she would now be a widow. She realized that the Jew’s blessing had saved her husband. William immediately called Mr. Green and thanked him for the blessing. His mother had been right. The Jews have the power to bless.

### והאלקים נסה את אברהם

#### And G-d tested Avraham. (22:1)

Was it only Avraham *Avinu*’s *nisayon*, test? One would think that Yitzchak *Avinu*, the *korban*, sacrifice-elect, was playing a leading role in this *nisayon*. Why is our Patriarch Avraham singled out – as opposed to Yitzchak? *Horav Moshe Neriyah, zl*, offers an insightful explanation which underscores the significance of Torah *chinuch*, especially that which is taught at home from parent to child. Avraham taught his son, Yitzchak, to fear Hashem. He taught him well – to the point that our second Patriarch was prepared to become an *olah*, offering, to Hashem.

*Va’yeilchu shneihem yachdav*; “And the two of them (father and son) went together” (Ibid 22:6). They walked together as one: Avraham, who knew that he was about to sacrifice his son, went with the same *zerizus*, alacrity, as did Yitzchak, who thought that he was accompanying his father on the way to slaughter an animal. In *pasuk* 8, the same phrase is repeated. Now Yitzchak was acutely aware that no lamb was being sacrificed. Indeed, he was the sacrifice. Yet, he walked with the same alacrity, same cadence as did his father. Why? Because he was raised by his father and mother to love and fear Hashem. The *Akeidah* was the fruit of thirty-seven years of Torah *chinuch* in Avraham and Sarah’s home. This was the pinnacle of their *chinuch*. The *Akeidah* was Avraham’s test, because, ultimately, it all comes back to the parents.

We try – we stay up nights – we provide the best *rebbeim* – and we say *Tehillim* that our children grow up to be a *nachas* to Hashem and to us. Some fall through the cracks. Most make it – when the parents do their job. In those rare instances in which parents do everything right, and, nonetheless, it does not work, it is due to a *g’zar din*, Heavenly decree. It is not always the result of cracks in the system. Sometimes we do everything right, and it still fails. Why? Hashem wanted it that way.

Speaking of raising children in the proper environment, we revert back to Avraham *Avinu* and Sarah *Imeinu* who raised their son Yitzchak to be *Avinu*, our second Patriarch. We derive a powerful educational lesson from Sarah *Imeinu*’s banishing Yishmael from her home. She felt that Yishmael would have an adverse spiritual effect on her Yitzchak. Is this right? Sodom and Amorah were so morally and ethically corrupt that their evil led to their total annihilation. Concerning them, Avraham pleaded with Hashem: Have compassion; please allow them to live; Pray for them – give them another chance. What about Yishmael? He is only a child. Does he not also deserve a chance to live? Is he worse than the Sodomites?

There is a difference. In Avraham and Sarah’s home,

they were in the midst of raising an *olah temimah*, perfect sacrifice. Yitzchak was no ordinary child. He was being primed for the seminal sacrifice. Yishmael was *metzacheck*, mocking, scoffing. A mocker could not be in the same environment as a Yitzchak. Sodom and Amorah were evil, but their evil was contained. They despised *chesed*, acts of kindness; they drove away the poor; they did not care to help others. They were certainly a reprehensible people, but they did not mock Hashem; they did not scoff and deride belief in the Almighty. One usually becomes turned off to the evil of a Sodomite, because it disgusts. Mockery, on the other hand, squirms its way into a person’s mind and corrupts it. Our child should never be in the same environment as one who mocks our beliefs.

### וישנם אברהם בנקר ויחבש את חמרו

#### So Avraham woke up early in the morning, and he saddled his donkey. (22:3)

The above *pasuk* teaches us about Avraham *Avinu*’s alacrity to serve Hashem. The Almighty instructed him regarding a mission. Avraham did not tarry. He went about performing the mission at the earliest possible moment. The *Tur Orach Chaim* 1:1 begins with this idea: “That you should ‘wake’ the morning – rather than (have) the morning wake you.” Likewise, in *Shulchan Aruch* 1:1, the *Bais Yosef* writes his well-known opening words: “Arise like a lion, to get up in the morning to serve his Creator; that you should wake up the morning.” While this concept is probably the last thing that goes through our minds when the alarm rings in the morning, when the last thing we feel like doing is getting up and out of a warm bed. Perhaps the following vignette will give us a reason to rethink our morning wake-up call.

*Horav Shalom Schwadron, zl*, shared the following thought concerning his revered *Rebbe, Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl* (related by *Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita*, in *Nifleosecha Asichah*), “I merited to be with *Rav Elya* for a period of six months, during which I was able to see his unique activities with regard to his serving Hashem. Among those which impressed me the most was his meticulous diligence to arise early in the morning. This went on without fail, regardless of how late he had retired to bed the night before, and continued when the venerable *Mashgiach* was in the later days of his life, when he was quite aged.

“I once asked him to explain why arising so early was so much a part of his service to Hashem. (After all, it was not as if he did not have a legitimate excuse to sleep a little bit longer, or had problems locating a later *minyán* for *Shacharis*.)

“He replied with the following, ‘After my one hundred and twenty, and I will be called before the Heavenly Tribunal, they will question me concerning my carrying out the laws of the *Shulchan Aruch*: “Did you fulfill each and every *halachah* in the *Shulchan Aruch*?” is a weighty and demanding question. It makes sense that they will ask in order of sequence beginning with the very first *halachah*: – “Arise like a lion to serve his Creator that you should wake-up the morning.” Imagine how I will appear if I cannot give a positive reply to the very first question! Therefore, I have decided that arising in the morning, before daybreak, is a requirement I cannot chance failing to respond to affirmatively. At least I will have one positive answer/merit in my behalf.’”

Life is a gift which must be appreciated. One executive rises an hour earlier in the morning, just so that he