

לעילו נשמת: פייגה בת הרב אהרן ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

לידות רפואה שלמה: מלכה בת רחל, מיכאל בן שולמית, יעקב משה בן דבורה שירה, ואברהם יהודה בן שרה רבקה.

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
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Torah Wellsprings

Vayera

Hashem Can Do Everything - Don't Lose Hope

Rebbe Tzaddok
HaKohen (*Divrei Sofrim* 16)
writes:

"When it comes to matters of this world, a yid should never lose hope... As Chazal (*Brachos* 10:) say, אפילו חרב חדה מונחת על צווארו של אדם, על ימנע עצמו מרחמים, 'Even when a sharp sword is placed upon one's neck, one shouldn't lose hope...'

"This also applies to matters of spirituality. Even if one is steeped in sin - including the sins that

Chazal (*Zohar* vol.1, 219:) say that *teshuvah* doesn't help or that *teshuvah* is very difficult to attain - one shouldn't lose hope. כי אין יאוש כלל אצל איש יהודי, 'because the concept of *yeush* doesn't apply for a yid.'

"The Jewish nation was built after a *yeush*... No one thought Avraham and Sarah could bear children. Hashem planned that the growth of the Jewish nation should come specifically after a period of *yeush*. Because a yid must believe that Hashem can always help - for there is nothing He cannot do."¹

1. Rabbeinu Nissim Gaon (*Sefer Masiyos* ד"ה אמרו חכמינו) tells the following story:

A wealthy yid thought to himself, "A person doesn't live forever. One day I will be in the grave, and I won't take a penny with me. What can I do with my wealth so it can help me even then?"

His advisors told him, "Help the poor, and that merit will be taken with you in Olam HaBa."

The wealthy yid decided to give his money to a pauper who is wholly in *yeush*, without any trace of hope. When he finds such a person, he will give him a lot of money, and make him wealthy in a moment.

He began speaking with paupers, asking them how they manage, and none of them had lost hope. One is relying on a wealthy uncle who might help him. Another is planning to find a job, etc.

He became frustrated. "Can't I find someone who has lost hope?"

Then he saw someone dressed in rags, sitting on top of a garbage heap, rummaging for something to eat. "Can there be anyone poorer than him?" he thought. "This person has certainly lost all hope" and he gave him a hundred silver coins.

The pauper asked, "Why did you give me so much money?"

"I made a vow that I will give a lot of money to the pauper who has lost all hope," the wealthy man replied.

The pauper replied, "Only a fool loses hope. I didn't lose hope. I trust in Hashem who is (*Tehillim* 113:7) *מֵאֲשׁוּפֹת יָרִים אֲבִיָּן*, raises the poor out of the garbage heap. If Hashem wills it, nothing can prevent Hashem from making me wealthy."

The wealthy man realized that he will never find a person who lost all hope, so he dug a pit in the cemetery and hid his money there.

The wheel of fortune turned. Eventually this wealthy man became very poor, and he went from door to door, collecting food and money. He reminded himself that he once buried a large sum of money in the cemetery. So, he went to the cemetery and started digging, but then the police arrived. He was arrested and brought before the mayor.

He explained to the mayor that he was once wealthy, and now he is poor, he goes collecting from door to door. He remembered that he hid in the cemetery, and he was digging there to retrieve it.

The mayor asked, "Don't you remember me? Years ago, you found me in the garbage heap, rummaging around for food. I told you

It states (*Yeshaya* 44:26),
 מְקִיִּים דְּבַר עֲבָדָיו וְעֵצַת מַלְאָכָיו יִשְׁלֹם,
 "Hashem fulfills the word
 of His servant. Hashem

fulfills the counsel of the
malachim." The Midrash
 (*Tanchuma, Vayeira* 16) explains:

that I trust in Hashem. I told you that if He wills it, He can make me wealthy. Now look at where my *bitachon* brought me!"

Because Hashem can do anything and everything. If we trust in Him, we will enjoy His salvations. This lesson was taught to us from the beginning of our nation. According to nature, Avraham and Sarah couldn't have children. Klal Yisrael could never be. But if Hashem wills it, miracles can happen beyond nature.

Reb Aryeh Shechter *shlita* tells that he once came to the Chazon Ish's home, but he found the door locked. At this time, the Chazon Ish was lying on his bed on the porch, and he saw Reb Aryeh Shechter. He told Reb Aryeh to climb up onto the porch. Reb Aryeh tried, but his clothes got caught on the fence, and he had to get down again. He tried a second time, and a third time, until he was able to get to the Chazon Ish's porch. The Chazon Ish said, "This is life. One tries to climb up to a higher level, and if he falls, he tries again and again. If he won't lose hope, he will succeed in the end" (*Maaseh Ish* vol.2, p.145).

קדיש הגדול (a longer Kaddish) is said exclusively on two occasions: either at a *siyum masechta* or after a burial. Perhaps this hints that a person's life is like a *masechta*. Some *masechtos* are long, like *Shabbos* and *Bava Basra*, and some are short. Similarly, some live long lives, and some life short lifespans. When a person is going through a *masechta*, there are more difficult pages, which he must toil to get through, and there are easier pages. Similarly, there are harder times and easier times in life. When one reaches a hard section of a *masechta*, he doesn't give up. He knows that if he keeps on going, page after page, he will eventually get to easier sections, and eventually he will finish the *masechta*. When a person is going through a hard period, he shouldn't give up either; he shouldn't be מיואש. This phase will pass, and better times will come.

"מקים דבר עבדו" Hashem performs the word of His servant' refers to Avraham, - Hashem's servant (as it states, Bereishis בעבור אברהם עבדו 26:24).²

"ועצת מלאכיו יושלים" Hashem fulfills the counsel of the *malachim*.' refers to the *malachim*'s good tidings that Avraham and Sarah will bear a child,"

The *pasuk* concludes:

האומר לירושלים תושב ולערי יהודה
 "...תבנינה וחרבותיה אקום
 Yerushalayim will be settled;
 the cities of Yehudah will be rebuilt;
 I shall reestablish its ruins."

The beginning of the *pasuk* refers to Avraham Avinu bearing children. The end of the *pasuk* discusses the rebuilding of

Yerushalayim. What is the connection between these two subjects?

Rebbe Tzadok HaKohen explains that their similarity lies in the fact that both matters were unexpected. Avraham was a hundred years old, and Sarah was ninety! The Midrashim say that naturally, Avraham and Sarah couldn't bear children.³ Therefore, Avraham, Sarah, and all who knew them lost hope. When the *malachim* told Sarah that she would have a child, it states (18:12), ותצחק ושרה בקרבה לאמר אחרי בלתי היתה לי ערונה ואדני זקן "Sarah laughed in her heart. She said, 'After I'm shriveled up, shall I become young again? And my husband is old.'" Sarah despaired of ever carrying

2. The Midrash explains that Avraham prayed for Avimelech, and Hashem answered his prayers.

3. Rebbe Tzaddok adds that if Hashem wanted to perform a miracle and grant them children, Hashem would have performed this miracle years earlier, since it's Hashem's way to למעט הנם, to minimize miracles.

a child. She experienced *yeush*, but the impossible happened!

Many people have lost hope in the rebuilding of Yerushalayim. Almost two thousand years have passed since we had our Beis HaMikdash. We went through so much, and the *geulah* has not yet come. There seems to be no light at the end of this long tunnel. The *pasuk* is talking to us and telling us that for Avraham and Sarah, all seemed lost as well, yet they bore a child in their old age. There will also come a time when Moshiach will come. We must not despair.

Rebbe Tzadok HaKohen brings sources from the *pesukim* and from Chazal stating that before Moshiach's arrival, mankind will find themselves in a state of *yeush*. They won't believe that they will ever be saved.

For example, it states (*Yeshaya* 53:1), מי האמין לשמועתינו

This means the nations of the world will enter a state of shock when the Jewish nation's salvation is announced. It won't be expected by the yidden or by anyone else, as Chazal (*Sanhedrin* 97:) state, אין בן דוד בא עד שתייאשו מן הגאולה, Moshiach will come to a generation that has lost hope.

However, when we contemplate Avraham and Sarah's miracles, we realize that miracles are awaiting us too! As it states (*Yeshaya* 51:2), הביטו אל אברהם אביכם ואל שרה, תחוללכם, 'Look at Avraham, your forefather, and at Sarah who gave birth to you.' Your origin is from a place of *yeush*. Naturally, you shouldn't have come into existence. But Hashem saved Avraham and Sarah beyond the rules of nature, and He will redeem you, too.

Rebbe Tzaddok writes:

"The mantra of Avraham Avinu, the head of the nation, was never to lose hope. Lot was captured;

everyone thought it was impossible to save him... But Avraham [didn't give up. He] girded his loins, took 318 men, and chased after the four kings [and saved Lot]. The Gemara says that the *gematria* of 318 is אֱלֵעִזֹר. The definition of אֱלֵעִזֹר is אֱלֹקֵי אָבִי בְעֹזְרִי, 'The G-d of my father is my helper' (see *Shemos* 18:4)...'' With this awareness that Hashem is his helper, and that anything is possible Avraham battled a war against the four mighty kings.

The *gematria* of יֵאוּשׁ is 317. If one adds one more, it is equal to 318, the *gematria* of אֱלֵעִזֹר, which stands for אֱלֹקֵי אָבִי בְעֹזְרִי. When one knows that Hashem is helping him, he won't have *yeush*.

The *Avodas Yisrael zt'l* (וְיָחִי ד' לְיִשְׁוֹעַתְךָ קִוִּיתִי ה') notes that Hashem's name (הוִי"ה) isn't mentioned in the *parashios* of *Mikeitz* or *Vayigash* until *Vayichi*, where it states, לְיִשְׁוֹעַתְךָ קִוִּיתִי ה', "I await Your salvation,

Hashem." This is because these *pesukim* tell the story of the exile to Mitzrayim: The seven plentiful years followed by the bad years (stated in *Mikeitz*), ending with Yaakov Avinu and his family coming down to Mitzrayim (stated in *Vayigash*). It wasn't a happy time; therefore, Hashem's name הוִי"ה of compassion isn't mentioned.

If one counts the number of these *pesukim* (that Hashem's name isn't mentioned) he will get the sum of 318! This hints to us that even when Hashem's compassion is concealed, it is always אֱלֵעִזֹר - אֱלֹקֵי אָבִי בְעֹזְרִי, that Hashem is helping us, from behind the scenes. And since Hashem is with us, there is never a reason for *yeush*.

Hachnasas Orchim

It states (*Bereishis* 21:33), וַיִּטַּע אֵשֶׁל בְּבֵּאֵר שֶׁבַע, "Avraham planted an *eishel* in Be'er Sheva." What was this *eishel*? The Gemara (*Sotah*

10.) gives two explanations. Reish Lakish says, "Avraham planted an orchard of all kinds of sweet fruits." Rashi explains that Avraham did this, להנות עוברים ושבים, "To give pleasure to the people passing by." Avraham cared about people, and he knew that they would appreciate sweet fruits while traveling, so he supplied this service for them. Travelers stopped to enjoy grapes, figs, pomegranates, esrogim, and all good fruits.

The Gemara's second translation of *אשל* is an inn. Avraham set up an inn, so those tired from their travels could rest up. Rashi writes that *אש"ל* stands for *אכילה, שתיה, לוויה*. Avraham provided food and drink for the travelers, and Avraham also escorted them when they left.

Avraham provided all these services for free - truly marvelous!

The beginning of the *parashah* also elaborates on Avraham's *hachnasas orchim*. At least eight or nine *pesukim* discuss Avraham's love for and perfection in this mitzvah.

The holy *sefarim* say that when a tzaddik excels in a mitzvah during his lifetime, he continues to perform this mitzvah after his *petirah* together with Yidden who perform this mitzvah. The tzaddik's *neshamah* comes to a Yid who performs this mitzvah that he excelled in, to help that Yid perform the mitzvah better.

Based on this principle, Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt"l* says that Avraham Avinu continues to do the mitzvah of *hachnasas orchim*. Whenever a Yid takes care of guests, Avraham Avinu is present, and he participates in the mitzvah.

The story of Avraham Avinu's *hachnasas orchim* and the three *malachim* is written in the past tense:

"He took... He went... He hurried... etc. The exception is the words (18:8), והוא עומד עליהם תחת העץ ויאכלו "[Avraham] stands above them..." These words are written in the present tense. This implies that until today, whenever Yidden do *hachnasas orchim*, Avraham stands right there. He is present, for he wants to partake in the mitzvah.

Reb Chaim of Brisk *zt'l* was extremely ill as a child, and all doctors lost hope. Rebbe Moshe Kobriner was visiting Brisk at the time and stayed in the home of Reb Chaim's grandfather (Reb Itche Efron *z'l*, the father-in-law of the Beis HaLevi). The grandfather said to the Rebbe, "What's going to be with my Chaimke?"

Rebbe Moshe Kobriner told him the *vort*, that אברהם עומד indicates that Avraham is present at every *hachnasas orchim*. He added, "Chazal (*Bava Basra* 16:) say, 'A precious stone hung from Avraham Avinu's neck. Whoever saw it was

healed.' Since you are hosting me and performing *hachnasas orchim*, this means Avraham Avinu is right here, in this home. Avraham has with him the gem that brings *refuah*. Your Chaimke will surely have a *refuah sheleimah*."

And indeed, he did. (This story is written in *Machsheves Nachum*, written by Reb Nachum Mikontikoziva-Chaifa. He adds that he told this story to Reb Chaim Brisker, and Reb Chaim said that he also knows this story. He heard it from his father.)

Once, Rebbe Moshe Kobriner was a guest in the home of Rebbe Aharon Karliner *zt'l*. Reb Aharon told him that his daughter was ill. Rebbe Moshe Kobriner said to the ill girl, "Your father is performing *hachnasas orchim*. This means right now, he has the stone of healing hanging on his neck. Look at your father, and you will be healed."

Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zt'l* was once talking with his chassidim about a certain Yeminite tzaddik who fed hundreds of refugees who lost their home in World War I.

One of the chassidim said, "I heard that this tzaddik was a *chavrusah* with one of the Kabbalah giants..." He was implying that this tzaddik was a scholar in the hidden parts of the Torah in addition to his chesed.

The Rebbe replied, "Why do you mention that? Right now, we're discussing that he fed hundreds of homeless Yidden..." as if to say, the merit of feeding Yidden is so great, it isn't necessary to add anything else.

The Sar Shalom of Belz *zt'l* built a majestic shul in Belz. Two generations later, his grandson, Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l*, added the Groyse Shtub, a large room where the *tishen* were celebrated. When the

construction of the Groyse Shtub was completed, Rebbe Yissachar Dov said, "A thousand years ago, on this spot, there lived a yid who excelled in the mitzvah of *hachnasas orchim* - like Avraham Avinu. When my grandfather built the shul, this yid thought it was time for *techiyas hameisim*. He got out of his grave and came to my grandfather. The Sar Shalom told him that it isn't *techiyas hameisim* yet, and the *niftar* returned to his grave. In the merit of his *hachnasas orchim*, which he kept with all his might right here, the Groyse Shtub was built on that spot."

The Maharil Diskin *zt'l* excelled in the mitzvah of *hachnasas orchim*. Once, the Maharil Diskin suddenly stood up from his in-depth studies, went over to the table to help an older man separate the soft parts of the bread from the crust, so it will be easier for him to eat.

People asked the Maharil Diskin, "You were so engrossed in your studies. How did you notice that this elderly man was struggling with his bread?"

The Maharil Diskin said that the answer to this question is written in this week's *parashah*. The *parashah* begins וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהֵי ה', Hashem came to Avraham, and Rashi writes, "It was the third day after the *bris milah* and Hakadosh Baruch Hu came to ask him how he was feeling." It was an incredible moment; Avraham was having a conversation with Hashem. So, how did Avraham notice the three travelers approaching? The answer is, Avraham was extremely dedicated to *hachnasas orchim*. When a person is devoted to a mitzvah, he is alert and aware of everything associated with this mitzvah - at all times."

The Maharil Diskin explained that he is also dedicated to *hachnasas*

orchim. That is why, even when he was learning, he was aware of his guest's needs.

At night, the city Kozmir was silent and all homes dark. But one house was lit up. It was the house where Rebbe Yechezkel Kozmir *zt'l* lived, for he would wake up at midnight and study Torah until the morning.

Two travelers once arrived at the city in the middle of the night and needed a place to stay. They knocked at the Rebbe's home, the only house that was lit. The Rebbe took them in, prepared a meal for them, and a place to sleep. This caused some noise, which awoke the *gabbai*, who slept in the next room. The *gabbai* thought, "Who could come to the Rebbe's house so late at night? I must be hearing *neshamos*. The *gabbai* assumed that *neshamos* came to the rebbe so he can rectify their souls! The *gabbai* was afraid to see

neshamos, so he stayed in his room.

The next morning, at *shacharis*, the gabbai told people about the *neshamos* who visited the rebbe's home the previous night. The rebbe said, "It's true that two *neshamos* came to

me last night, but they didn't come to me so I can fix their *neshamos*. They came to fix my *neshamah*," because, through the people that came to Rebbe Moshe Kobriner's home, he had the merit to perform this special mitzvah.⁴

4. The Avnei Nezer *zt'l* was once serving a guest who protested, "I'm a simple person. I don't deserve this honor."

The Avnei Nezer opened the window. There was a tannery across the street. The Avnei Nezer said, "In the tannery, you find hides. But when these hides becomes tefillin, they become holy. Similarly, regardless of your level, now you are a mitzvah, a *cheftza shel mitzvah* (an item used for a mitzvah) so now you are *kadosh*.

The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* was taking care of a guest. The guest said, " You don't have to do this for me. Really, I can set up the room myself..."

"Really?" the Chofetz Chaim replied. "And tomorrow, will you wear my tefillin for me?"

As a *bachur*, Reb Chaim Brim *zt'l* would often travel to Bnei Brak to speak in learning with the Chazon Ish *zt'l*, and then he would return to Yerushalayim, where he lived. One night, he missed the last bus back, so he had to stay the night in Bnei Brak in the Chazon Ish's home. He tells that he felt very uncomfortable, because three great people served him.

The Chazon Ish, (the Chazon Ish's brother-in-law) the Steipler, and the Steipler's *rebbetzin*. The Chazon Ish gave the orders; one brought *negel vasser*, one brought food, another prepared a bed... He said, "Please don't do this for me."

When the Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* was very old, he couldn't travel anymore to rabbinic gatherings, so the rabbanim decided to hold their next meeting in the Chofetz Chaim's house. Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzhinsky *zt'l* also came to this meeting, and the Chofetz Chaim was very happy to see him. One of the rabbanim said, "Now, that Reb Chaim Ozer came, we are ten people. Perhaps we should daven *minchah* now?"

The Chofetz Chaim disagreed. He said, "It doesn't state anywhere that we should ask a guest if he wants to daven."

The Chofetz Chaim added a lesson from this week's *parashah*: Avraham told Avimelech (20:11), רק אין יראת אלקים במקום הזה, that he saw

that there was no *yiras Hashem* in his town. How did Avraham perceive that? Rashi writes, אכסנאי שבא לעיר, על עסקי אכילה ושתייה שואלין אותו, או על עסקי אשתו שואלין אותו, אשתך היא או אחותך היא, "When a guest comes to your city, do you ask him about food and drink (whether he has where to eat) or do you ask him about his wife, 'Is she your wife or your sister?'"

The Chofetz Chaim explained, "This means, when a guest arrives, you are supposed to ask about him whether he is tired or hungry."

The Chofetz Chaim asked Reb Chaim Ozer *zt'l* whether he wants to eat. Reb Chaim Ozer said that he doesn't. The Chofetz Chaim said, "But you are certainly tired; you just

The Chazon Ish replied, "Since when does an *esrog* tell the person holding him how he should be handled? Now you are a *mitzvah*, and you can't tell the people who are obligated to do this *mitzvah* how to perform it."

arrived. Go rest up a little bit."

Avraham told the guests (18:5), *ואקחה פת לחם*, "I will take bread..." It seems that he should have said, *פת ואתנה פת לחם*, "I will give you bread." The Ahavas Yisrael *zt'l* replied that when one gives bread to the hungry, he is the one who is "taking." As Chazal say, "More than the wealthy do with the pauper, the pauper does for the wealthy" as he gave them the opportunity to do a mitzvah.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 127.) states, גדולה הכנסת אורחים יותר, מקבלת פני השכינה, "Taking in guests is greater than greeting the *Shechinah*."

בדרך צחות, we can explain that we greet the *Shechinah* once a month, by Kiddush Levanah, as we say, אלמלא לא, וכו ישראל אלא להקביל פני אביהם שבשמים, פעם אחת בחודש דים, "If the Jewish nation would greet their Father in heaven once a month, it is enough..." But *hachnasas orchim* should be יותר מקבלת פני השכינה, more often. This means we should have guests more than once a month. ⁵

5. The Avnei Nezer *zt'l* was once serving a guest who protested, "I'm a simple person. I don't deserve this honor."

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גדולה לגימה, **The Merit of Giving Food**

The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 103:) states, גדולה לגימה, "It is a great deed to give food to people." The Maharal adds that there is a particular benefit in לגימה, giving food, more than just giving money so the pauper can buy food.

The Gemara (*ibid.*) describes the rewards and the benefits that go to those who perform *hachmasas orchim*, and in contrast, it discusses the punishments

for those who don't. It states (*Devarim* 23:4-5), לא יבא עמוני ומואבי בקהל ה'... על דבר אשר לא קדמו אתכם בלחם ובמים בדרך בצאתכם ממצרים, "An Amonite and a Moabite may not marry into the Jewish nation. [This means the converts of Amon and Moav are forbidden to marry into the Jewish nation]. Because they didn't greet you with bread and water when you were on the road, upon leaving Mitzrayim."

The Chinuch (*mitzvah* 561) explains, "Hashem commands us to hate them

As a *bachur*, Reb Chaim Brim *zt'l* would often travel to Bnei Brak to speak in learning with the Chazon Ish *zt'l*, and then he would return to Yerushalayim, where he lived. One night, he missed the last bus back, so he had to stay the night in Bnei Brak in the Chazon Ish's home. He tells that he felt very uncomfortable, because three great people served him.

The Chazon Ish, (the Chazon Ish's brother-in-law) the Steipler, and the Steipler's *rebbetzin*. The Chazon Ish gave the orders; one brought *negel vasser*, one brought food, another prepared a bed... He said, "Please don't do this for me."

The Chazon Ish replied, "Since when does an *esrog* tell the person holding him how he should be handled? Now you are a *mitzvah*, and you can't tell the people who are obligated to do this *mitzvah* how to perform it."

because they acted so corruptly. They didn't even offer bread and water to a large nation, tired from their travels, who were passing along their borders... Such people aren't fitting to marry into the Jewish nation."

The Gemara gives this as an example of the punishment that comes to those who don't feed the hungry. As the Gemara expresses it, *מרחקת את הקרובים*, "It distances those who are near." Amon and Moav are near Eretz Yisrael geographically, and there are also familial ties, for they are Lot's descendants, and Lot was Avraham's nephew (*Rashi*). Nevertheless, they were distanced, and they may not marry into the Jewish nation because of their uncaring, callous nature.

In contrast, Yisro extended his hospitality to Moshe when Moshe came to Midyan. As Yisro said to his daughters (*Shemos* 2:20), *למה זה עובתן את האישי קראן לו ויאכל*

לחם, "Why did you abandon the man. Call him and let him eat bread." In reward, Yisro's descendants were great Torah scholars and members of the Sanhedrin. The Gemara calls this, *ומקרבת את הרחוקים*, "[Feeding people] brought those who are distant (*Yisro*) close."

The Gemara states another benefit of *hachnasas orchim*: *ומעלמת עינים מן הרשעים*, "Hashem looks away from the inequities of the *resha'im*." When one performs the mitzvah of *hachnasas orchim*, Hashem doesn't think about his sins.

The proof is Michah - a Jew who brought much havoc and destruction to the Jewish nation. It states (*Zecharyah* 10:11), *ועבר בים צרה*. The Gemara explains that when the Yidden walked through the Yam Suf, Michah carried an idol with him. According to another explanation, Michah carried a gold plaque that had Hashem's name written on it. He

intended to use it to make an *avodah zarah*. And indeed, a couple of months later, he threw this plaque into the fire, and the *egel* emerged (see also *Rashi, Shemos 32:4*).

In Eretz Yisrael, Michah continued his evil ways. The *Navi* (*Shoftim 17*) tells that he made an idol and built a temple for its worship. The Gemara states "Migrav (where Michah's temple stood) was just three *mil* (aprox. 3 km.) from Shilo (where Mishkan Shilo stood). The smoke of Michah's altar mixed with the smoke from Mishkan Shilo's *mizbeiach*. The *malachim* wanted to kill Michah. Hakadosh Baruch

Hu said, 'Let him live, because פתו מצויה לעוברי דרכים, he gives bread passing travelers.'" Michah ran a *hachnasas orchim* rest area on the road, and in this merit, Hashem overlooked his sins.

The Gemara proves from this that in the merit of *hachnasas orchim* מעלמת עין, Hashem chooses not to notice the evil deeds of *resha'im*. Michah was granted life because of this good deed and didn't lose his portion in Olam HaBa.⁶

The Gemara says yet another benefit that comes from *hachnasas orchim*, and it is based on a story written in *Malachim 1* (ch.13):

6. Chazal (*Bava Kama 50*.) say, "בל האומר הקב"ה ותרן יוותרו חיי, "Whoever says Hakadosh Baruch Hu overlooks sins, his life should be overlooked." Hashem doesn't forgive *aveiros*, so how can we say that in the merit of *hachnasas orchim* Hashem will not see one's *aveiros*?

When one brings in guests, he serves everyone: the worthy and the unworthy. He doesn't check the righteousness of each guest before he serves him food. And since he isn't measuring the level of righteousness of his guests, Heaven does the same way with him, and Hashem doesn't look at his sins.

King Yeravam was sacrificing to idols in Beis El, when ערו הנביא arrived to rebuke him. With his arm outstretched, Yeravam pointed to Ido and said, "Catch him!" ותיבש ידו אשר שלה עליו ולא יכל להשיבו "Yeravam's hand...dried up and he couldn't bring it back." He pleaded with Ido to pray for him, and *navi* prayed, and Yeravam was healed. Yeravam said to Ido, באה אחי באה אחי, "Come to my house, eat a meal, and I will give you a present."

The *navi* replied, "Even if you plan on giving me half of your wealth, I won't come with you, and I won't eat bread or drink water here [in Beis El]. Hashem commanded me, 'don't eat bread and don't drink water...'"

Ido began his route home and met someone who said, "Come to my house. I will give you bread." Ido replied that Hashem commanded him

that he mustn't eat bread or drink water in that place.

The man replied, "I'm a *navi* just as you are. I also received a prophecy, saying that I should bring you to my house to eat bread and drink water." Ido believed him, went to his home, and ate the meal.

He didn't know that this person was a false prophet of the Baal.

The *pasuk* (ibid. 13:20) states, ויהי הם ישבים אל השלחן ויהי דבר ה' אל הנביא "They were sitting at the table, and the [false] prophet received a [true] prophecy..." He told Ido HaNavi that since he ate with him, he will be devoured by a lion, and that's what happened to Ido on his way home.

How did this false *navi* get a true prophecy? The Gemara explains that it was in the merit of *hachnasas orchim*. He fed Ido, and in that merit, he received a true prophecy. As the Gemara writes, גדולה לגימיה...

providing others is a great merit. ומשרה שכינה על נביאי בעל, "...It causes even false prophets to perceive the *Shechinah* and to a receive true *nevuah*."

The Gemara concludes, ושגגתו עולה זרין. This means that if one doesn't help hungry people if he sins accidentally, he is punished as if he purposely sinned. The Gemara brings an example from *sefer Shmuel* 1 (ch.21-22):

Yonoson told Dovid to escape from his father, Shaul. The Gemara says, אלמלי הלהו יהונתן לדוד שתי ככרות לחם לא נהרגה נוב עיר הכהנים ולא נטרד דואג האדומי, ולא נהרגה שאול ושלוש בניו "If Yonoson would have given Dovid two loaves of bread, Nov, the city of *kohanim*, wouldn't be murdered, Doeg HaAdomi wouldn't lose his portion in Olam HaBa, and Shaul with his three sons wouldn't be killed."

This is because Dovid escaped without food, so he went to the home of the

kohen gadol Achimelech in Nov and asked for a meal. Doeg found out about this, and he told Shaul that Nov is rebelling against him, for they are helping Shaul's enemy. Shaul ordered all the *kohanim* in Nov killed.

The result was: Doeg lost his portion in Olam HaBa because of the *lashon hara* he spoke. Shaul was punished for killing the *kohanim* of Nov. His punishment was that Shaul and three of his children were killed in war. And the Gemara holds Yonoson responsible for all this because he didn't give two loaves of bread to Dovid. This means, if one doesn't provide food to those who need it, he is held responsible for everything wrong that happens due to this error.

***Segulah* for Bearing Children**

The Baal HaTanya *zt'l* told the Magid of Mezritz *zt'l*, "It's already 24 years

after my *chasunah*, and I still don't have children."

The Magid told him to perform *hachnasas orchim*, and he will merit children. As it states (*Tehillim* 119:9), במה יזכה נער, "How does one merit children? את אורחיו, by hosting guests."

The Magid added, "The father of the Baal Shem Tov also merited his child in the merit of *hachnasas orchim*.

This is as it states הא לכם זרע (*Bereishis* 47:23), and ה"א is *roshei teivos* for הכנסת אורחים. This implies that with *hachnasas orchim* one can merit זרע, bearing children.

In this week's *parashah*, Avraham Avinu was ninety-nine, and Sarah Imeinu was eighty-nine, and they were both barren. In the merit of *hachnasas orchim* they bore a child the following year.

The Ishah Shunamis also bore a child in the merit of hosting Elisha HaNavi. As it states

(*Melachim* 2 ch.4), "One day, Elisha traveled to Shunam. An important woman lived there, and she convinced Elisha to eat bread by her. From then on, when Elisha was in Shunam, he ate there. The woman said to her husband, 'I know that he is a holy man, a man of G-d. Let's build a nice room for him upstairs, and we will place there a bed, table, chair, and lamp. When he comes to us, he can go there. [The next time Elisha was in Shunam] he went to this room... Elisha asked Geichazi (his servant), 'What should we do for her [in exchange for this favor]?' Geichazi replied, 'She doesn't have children...' Elisha said, 'Call her.' She came and stood in the doorway. Elisha said, 'You will bear a child...'"

She merited this child in the merit of *hachnasas orchim*.

The Midrash (*Tanchuma Ki Seitze* 2) states, "There are mitzvos whose reward is children, like Sarah, who

hosted guests, and the Shunamis [woman] who hosted Elisha."

Women were cursed (*Bereishis* 3:16), בעצב תלדי בנים, that they will have the pain of childbirth. עצב is *roshei teivos* for ענייה צרה באורחין, which means that women's nature is to be stingy with guests. If she won't have עצב, which means, if she is generous with guests, she won't have the עצב of בעצב בנים, the pain of labor, either.

On the words, וישע אשל, (21:33)), the Rabbeinu b'Chaya comments that the only other place where וישע is written is (*Bereishis* 2) וישע גן. בערן מקדם. To hint that for the mitzvah of *hachnasas orchim* one will merit Gan Eden.

The rewards for *hachnasas orchim* are given even in this world. As we say every day, אלו דברים שאדם אוכל פירותיהם בעולם הזה... הכנסת אורחים, "These are the things that one eats the fruits [of his good deeds] in this world...*hachnasas orchim*".

Many blessings come from *hachnasas orchim*. Those who engage in it are fortunate - in this world and the next world.

Help Your Brothers

The Gemara (*Moed Kattan* 28.) tells stories of the how the holy Tana'im and Amoraim gave the *malach hamaves* a hard time taking their lives because they were always learning Torah and were constantly clean from sin. One example was Reb Chiya. Heaven sent the *malach hamaves* to take Reb Chiya up to heaven, but as much as the *malach* tried, Reb Chiya remained alive.

The *malach hamaves* came up with a plan. He dressed up as a pauper, knocked on Reb Chiya's door, and asked for food. Reb Chiya told his family to give him bread. The *malach hamaves* said to Reb Chiya, "I see you have compassion for the poor. Why don't you have

compassion on me? I was sent to take you, I'm trying, and I'm not able to."

The *malach hamaves* showed him a staff of fire. This is how Reb Chiya knew that he was the *malach hamaves* (*Rashi*). Others say that with the rod of fire the *malach hamaves* showed Reb Chiya that he was being beaten with fiery rods, because he didn't yet bring Reb Chiya's soul, as he was supposed to. He therefore requested that Reb Chiya have compassion on him (*Anaf Yosef*).

Reb Chiya had compassion on the *malach hamaves* and allowed the *malach hamaves* to bring his *neshamah* to Olam Haba.

Let us think about this Gemara. The *malach hamaves* told Reb Chiya, "If you have compassion on the poor, why don't you have compassion on me?" But how can you compare having *rachmanus* on the poor, to having compassion

on the *malach hamaves*, and to willingly allow oneself to die? The answer is that Reb Chiya's charity was definitely done with *mesirus nefesh*. With self-sacrifice, he helped the poor. Therefore, the *malach hamaves* told him, "If you do so for the poor, why don't you have *mesirus nefesh* and have compassion on me, too?"

This means that our desire and attempts to help the poor should be done with all our strength and self-sacrifice.

For some people, it is *mesirus nefesh* just to be kind. When they see a pauper, they are tempted to shout, "Why don't you get a job!" or some other humiliating words. They don't realize that if it weren't for Hashem's help, they would be just like the pauper, begging at people's doors.

And for some, it is *mesirus nefesh* to part with their money.

Helping the needy isn't an easy mitzvah, but, as we see in this week's *parashah*, this is the mitzvah that Avraham excelled in, and we should follow in his footsteps and seek to help our fellow man.

It states (20:13), ויהי כאשר, התעו אותי אלקים... אמרי לי אחי הוא. The Rebbe of Biala *zt'l* (*Divrei Binah*) explains, ויהי כאשר, when Yidden are sent to *galus*... אמרי לי אחי הוא, Yidden! Please say about your fellow man, "You are my brother."

As the Bardichover Rav *zt'l* (quoted in *Bas Ayin*) explains, אחר in Shema stands for אה ד, to be אה, the brother, דל"ה, of the poor. To each pauper, feel like you are his brother, be motivated to help him as much as you can.

The Yid HaKadosh of Pshischa *zt'l* on (*Bereishis* 19:7) אל נא אחי תרעו explains that נא means half (as in *Shemos* 12:9, אל תאכלו ממנו נא, "Don't eat the *korban Pesach* half roasted"). The *pasuk* is

saying, אל נא, don't let your friendships be halfway. אחי תרעו, be a complete friend to your fellow man.

This friendship chases away the *yetzer hara*. As it states (18:5), וסעדו לבכם אחר, the Beis Avraham *zt'l* explains, וסעדו לבכם when Yidden eat together (for the sake of increasing friendship) אחר, the *yetzer hara* (as the Gemara *Shabbos* 105: calls the *yetzer hara* תעבורו א"ל אחר) is removed.

How to Perform Miracles

The Be'er Mayim Chaim (*Noach*) discusses how supernatural miracles happened to Avraham, but not to Noach. Avraham threw the earth, and it was transformed into weapons. He was thrown into a burning furnace and survived, and so on. In comparison, Noach was saved naturally, in the teiva בדרך הטבע. The difference between them lies in the way they served Hashem. Avraham served Hashem

beyond the rules of his nature. As *Chazal* (*Bereishis Rabbah* 42:13) teach, "The entire world was on one side, and Avraham was on the other." He also went against his nature with the ten tests, especially the *akeidah*.⁷ He was rewarded *מדה כנגד מדה*, and Hashem performed supernatural miracles for him. Noach, on the other hand, served Hashem according to the rules of nature, as it states (66:9), *את האלקים התהלך נח*, "Noach walked with אלקים, nature" (because *אלקים* is *gematria הטבע*, nature). He served Hashem within the confines of nature, so he was saved within the rules of nature.

In the days of the Be'er Mayim Chaim, many

tzaddikim performed miracles. The Be'er Mayim Chaim explains that they did these miracles because they served Hashem beyond nature. He writes, "Even in our generation, one sees the miracles that happen often by the *gedolei yisrael*, the true tzadikim. Nature bends for them. This is because they serve Hashem with righteousness and truthfulness beyond the rules of nature."

We add that in our generation, too, miracles and wonders will happen to those who serve Hashem beyond their natural limits. One doesn't have to literally be *moser nefesh* to do something outstanding for Hashem. Even small tests, like learning Torah when

7. For years, Avraham Avinu *a'h* yearned for a son, and when Yitzchak was born, he loved him with all his heart. Avraham was also the paradigm of kindness and compassion. It was absolutely against his nature to do anything that would harm another person. Yet, when Hashem told him to bring his son for a sacrifice, he was ready to do so with *mesirus nefesh*. He went beyond his nature, because his love to Hashem surpassed all considerations.

one doesn't want to, refraining from speaking *lashon hara*, remaining silent in a *machlokes*, overcoming anger, dressing more modestly, and so on, are examples of *mesirus nefesh*, and for passing these tests, miracles will occur.

The Gemara (*Brachos* 20) states: Rav Papa asked Abaya, "Why did miracles occur for the scholars of the past, but they don't occur for us?"

Abaya replied, "The earlier generations were *moser nefesh* for Hashem. We aren't *moser nefesh*."

In *Sanhedrin* (106:) the Gemara repeats this question: Why did miracles happen in the past and not in the present? This time, Rava answers, אלא הקב"ה ליבא בעי, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu desires the heart." רהמנא ליבא בעי means give your heart to Hashem by abandoning your temptations and desires that go against His will. This is *mesirus nefesh*

that has the power to change the rules of nature.

Pass the Tests

The Shlah advises us, "If the *yetzer hara* tells you to commit an aveirah, think: "Perhaps Hashem is testing me now as He tested Avraham Avinu." Think, "Perhaps this is one of the key tests of my life." With this in mind, you will pass the test.

As the Shlah writes, "When a person knows he is being tested, he will be very vigilant, and he will pass the test. Think such thoughts ... because Hakadosh Baruch Hu sends challenges to test people. Fortunate is the person who always thinks about Hashem."

The Torah says, וישא אברהם את עיניו וירא והנה איל אחר נאחו בסבך, "Avraham raised his eyes and saw that behold, there is another ram entangled in the bush." What is the definition of איל אחר, another

ram? Was there more than one ram at *akeidas Yitzchak*?

The Or LaShamayim (*Chukas*) in the name of the Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* answers that איל אהר suggests that *akeidas Yitzchak* wasn't a one-time event that happened with Avraham and Yitzchak. Instead, whenever one is tempted to do an *aveirah* and he refrains, that's an איל אהר, another *akeidas Yitzchak*.

In *mussaf* of Rosh Hashanah we say, ועקידת יצחק, לזרעו היום ברחמים תזכור, "Remember *akeidas Yitzchak* for his children's sake, today." This *brachah* can be translated, ועקידת יצחק the sacrifices and the mesirus nefesh, לזרעו, that the Jewish nation make, היום, even today, in this generation, ברחמים תזכור, Hashem should

compassionately remember and rouse His *rachmanus* on us. Until this very day, *akeidas Yitzchaks* is taking place in the guise of the daily struggles that Yidden go through.

Most tests are more manageable than *akeidas Yitzchak*, because after passing the test, everyone is alive and well. No one is sacrificed on an altar. The challenge was just to refrain from a forbidden speech or to do a mitzvah. The Shlah (*Vayeira* 42) learns a *kal vechomer*: If you are prepared to sacrifice your life, literally, for Hashem's honor, shouldn't you also be prepared "to overcome your temptations, such as to rise early to daven and learn, and to withhold from forbidden pleasures, and to refrain from idle talk, etc."⁸

8. The following story demonstrates that when one knows that he is being tested, he can stand up to the hardest trials:

A high ranking official in the Israeli intelligence (the Shabak) was walking towards his car in an Arab neighborhood, when suddenly he was surrounded by a group of Arabs and kidnapped. They

The *Mishnah Berurah* (1:13) writes, "We say the Parashah of the *Akeidah* [each morning] to overcome the *yetzer hara*, as Yitzchak was *moser nefesh*." This reminds us also to be prepared to be *moser nefesh* for Hashem. We should also be prepared to

keep the easier mitzvos, too.

The Baal HaTanya *zt'l* was in the *beis medresh* of the Magid of Mezritz *zt'l* and heard three people discussing the *akeidah*. "What is so special about this test? Wouldn't every *yid* sacrifice their child, if

brought him to a prison and told him that if he will reveal the secrets of the Israeli government, they will release him. But if he refuses to speak, they will torture him until he speaks or until he dies.

"I refuse to say anything," he told them. He refused to put the Jewish people in Eretz Yisrael in danger.

One day, his captors told him, "We'll give you five minutes to think it over: If you won't speak this time, we will begin to torture you. This is your last chance." And then the captors left his cell.

He decided to start speaking. He didn't have the strength to endure the torture.

But this time, when his captors left his room, they accidentally left the door a drop open, and he was able to hear his captors speaking with each other. He couldn't make out exactly what they were saying, but he heard them speak in Hebrew! He understood that they weren't Arabs. They were the Shabak. This was all just a test, to see whether he was able to keep secrets. He now resolved to remain silent. They wouldn't harm him.

They came back with the torture tools, but he didn't speak. This is because when one knows he is being tested he is able to pass the tests.

Hashem spoke with them and told them to do so?"

One answered that it's true that every Yid would do the same, but that's because Yidden are descendants of Avraham Avinu, and they inherited Avraham's devotion to Hashem. But Avraham was the son of Terach. He didn't have the genes from his ancestors to draw devotion from. He had to reach this high level on his own. That's the reason the *akeidah* is considered a challenging test for Avraham.

The second person wasn't fully satisfied with that answer because when one is commanded directly by Hashem to perform the *akeidah*, he would undoubtedly do the same, even without possessing a frame of reference or influence from his parents and ancestors. "In my opinion, the greatness of the *akeidah* is that Avraham performed it immediately, and he didn't put it off for another time. When

Hashem told Avraham to do the *akeidah*, Hashem didn't specify *when* he should do it. Technically, Avraham could have waited several years before bringing Yitzchak as a *korban*. But because of Avraham's great love to Hashem, he didn't wait — and that's the greatness of his deed."

Yet, the third person was not satisfied with that answer because every Yid would also go immediately if they received this message directly from Hashem. "In my opinion, the greatness of Avraham is when the *malach* came and told Avraham that he shouldn't sacrifice Yitzchak. At that moment, Avraham wasn't any happier than when Hashem told him to *והעלהו לטעולה*, to sacrifice Yitzhak. This is the part of the *akeidah* that is so magnificent."

The Baal HaTanya commented that each of them spoke in accordance with the spiritual level they were on.



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