

Parashas
Vayeira

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י"ז חשוון תשפ"ו
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י"ל ע"י

קהילת שבתי בבית ד'

בנשיאות מורנו ורבנו הרה"צ
רבי גמליאל הכהן
רבינוביץ שליט"א

טיב הקהילה

English edition

באנגלית

טיב הפרשה

בין כך ובין כך קרויים בנים

Either way, they are called sons

טיב המערכת

אלקים עמך בכל אשר אתה עושה

G-d is with you in all that you do

In our parasha it is related that when Avimelech saw that Avraham Avinu had a special Heavenly assistance, or in his words (21:22), "G-d is with you in all that you do," he came to him together with the officer of his army in order to make a "peace treaty" with him. And what were the things that Avimelech saw from which he understood that Avraham had special Heavenly assistance? Rashi says, "Because he saw that he left the neighborhood of Sodom in peace, and that he fought with the kings and they fell into his hand, and that his wife was remembered in her old age." These are indeed three very great things that certainly prove that there is a Heavenly and miraculous supervision here. If so, the question is asked: How is it possible that Avimelech remained the same goy even after he saw these things? How did he not change his conduct and become a believer?!

The truth is that this same question may be asked even today. For even in our days, anyone who has eyes in his head sees these things clearly: the Nation of Israel is like a sheep among seventy wolves, and in every generation they rise up against us to annihilate us, and HaKadosh Baruch Hu saves us from their hands. And although the entire world sees this, most of the world remains as they are—the gentiles in their gentility, the haters of Israel in their hatred—and all the rest continue to look on with indifference. And how is it that none of them is aroused to faith that there is a Creator of the world Who rules all of creation and guards His nation?!

The Ramban answers this question: "And from the great and public miracles, a person acknowledges the hidden miracles, which are the foundation of the entire Torah, for a person has no share in the Torah of Moshe Rabeinu until he believes that all of our matters and occurrences are all miracles; there is in them no nature and no customary way of the world, whether among the multitude or the individual, but if one fulfills the commandments, his reward will bring him success, and if he transgresses them, his punishment will cut him off—all by decree of the Most High." For the faith of a Jew does not depend upon signs and wonders, for all of creation is one great miracle. And when a believing Jew sees a miracle or a wonder, it is only in order to further strengthen his faith. But a goy may see miracles and still remain the same goy as before, for faith is not acquired through miracles!

Tiv HaTorah - Vayeira

[As an introduction to the following maamer, it is proper to note that the subject under discussion is extremely delicate and complex. It is very difficult to establish "rules" in such matters, for almost every case depends upon the guidance of a Rav. The matters presented here are brought only as "good advice," which in the opinion of Rabeinu can be of benefit in many instances. It should also be noted that Rabeinu's words in this maamer concern only the matter of love toward wayward children, and not the question of keeping them in one's home, which is something that cannot be discussed in public, and each case requires a personal halachic inquiry.]

קח נא את בנך את יחידך אשר אהבת את יצחק (כב, ב)

Please take your son, your only one, whom you love, Yitzchak (22:2)

Rashi explains: Your son – Avraham said to Him, "I have two sons." G-d said to him, "Your only one." Avraham said to Him, "This one is the only one to his mother and this one is the only one to his mother." G-d said to him, "Whom you love." Avraham said to Him, "I love them both." G-d said to him, "Yitzchak."

When we contemplate Rashi's words, we can discern a very necessary point in the realm of education. For earlier (21:9) the Torah says, 'ותרא' - "And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Avraham, mocking," and Rashi there explains that the word "mocking" can be interpreted as referring to any one of the three cardinal sins—idolatry, immorality, and murder. Thus, his sins had already multiplied exceedingly, and as a result Avraham was compelled to send him away. And when he sent him, it was done with a tone of anger, as implied by Rashi on the posuk (21:14) 'ויקה לחם וחמת' - "And he took bread and a skin of water," who says, "and not silver or gold, because he hated him for having gone to evil ways."

Yet after all this, when HaKadosh Baruch Hu says to him, "Please take your son, your only one, whom you love," Avraham answers and says, "I love both of them." This is astonishing! After Yishmael had transgressed all the grave sins, and after it is precise from the Torah that Avraham hated him, Avraham says to HaKadosh Baruch Hu that he loves Yishmael as he loves Yitzchak! And this was not yet at the time when Yishmael repented, for that occurred only at the end of Avraham's life, as we learn later from the posuk describing Avraham's death 'בשיבה טובה' - "in good old age" (25:8), meaning that only the "old age" was good, because then Yishmael repented (see Rashi there). But at the time of the Akeidah, he was still in rebellion—so how could Avraham answer Hashem Yisbarach that both were beloved to him, Yishmael as Yitzchak?

The answer is that in truth, Avraham loved Yishmael even after hearing that he had gone astray. What Rashi writes, that he “hated him,” was only outwardly, to show him that his deeds were not pleasing in his eyes. For this reason too, he gave him only the bare minimum necessary for his journey. But in the inner depths of his heart, Avraham’s love for Yishmael and for Yitzchak was completely equal.

For this is the obligation of every father—to arouse love in his heart even toward children who do not obey their parents and teachers, even toward those who have truly strayed from the path. And the intent is not toward some small measure of love, but to “abundant love”—the very same love with which he loves his successful children from whom he merits to receive much holy satisfaction. Only for educational purposes should he express disapproval of their actions and speak to them harshly.

And by awakening love toward them, love is also awakened within them toward their father.

This is a tested and proven method to bring them back to their original purity, for the posuk says (Mishlei 27:19): ‘כמים הפנים לפנים כן לב האדם לאדם’ - “As water reflects the face to the face, so the heart of man to man.” Thus, in their hearts too, love and compassion are stirred toward their parents.

As the Rebbe of Kretchnif Sighet zt”l, told me about his father, the Rebbe of Kretchnif Yerushalayim, Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch zt”l: he would draw close young men who had fallen away, and after spending some time in his presence, they would slowly return to the fold of Judaism until they became G-d-fearing and complete. When his son asked him how he succeeded in influencing them, he replied, “All of my success comes only from love. Every boy who comes to me—within me arises compassion and an immense love for him. That love does its work, and once they sense it, love and affection are awakened within them toward me. As a result, they are drawn after me, and after a time, they nullify their own will before mine, abandon their desires, and take upon themselves to fulfill their duty in the world.”

Yishmael’s repentance too can be attributed to Avraham’s love for him—it was that love

Tiv Hashidduchim


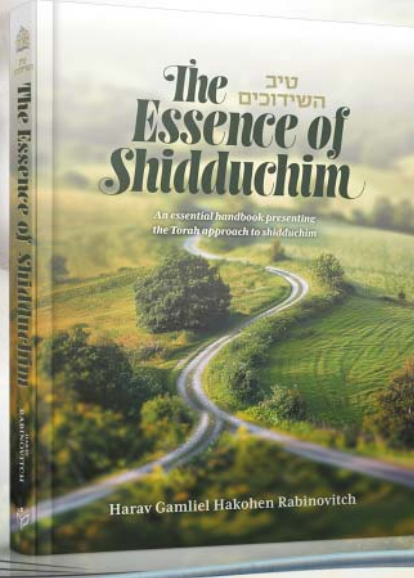
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which drew him to repentance, even though he had already distanced himself greatly and committed many serious sins.

However, even if the parents are very pained by their wayward son and his corrupt path, and it is difficult for them to awaken love and compassion for him in their hearts, they must at least refrain from harboring resentment toward their son. For sometimes, even if the son does not merit love from his parents, a desire awakens within him to return to the embrace of Judaism. He realizes that he was misled by his yetzer in vain, which drew him after emptiness and chaos, and he recognizes that true happiness lies only with those whose inheritance is Judaism.

But even if he wishes to repent, he needs a helping hand. And to whom shall he turn for it? If he knows that his father loves him—or at least does not hate him—he can turn to him and ask for his help. But if he knows that his father harbors resentment toward him, he will be ashamed to appear before him, and against his will he will remain cast off, chalilah.

I will add further what the great Gaon Rabbi Yisrael Yaakov Fischer zt”l, the Raavad of the Holy City of Yerushalayim, told me: even if

the son is not bashful, and if he desires a helping hand he will not mind his parents’ resentment, and he will be capable of approaching them and asking for their help—still, the resentment can have its effect, and from Heaven they may withhold his repentance because of it, as a punishment for having caused pain to his father and mother. Therefore, it is proper that parents should at least strive to awaken within themselves some compassion for such a child, so that they will not, chalilah, come to resentment.

And they must know that aside from the fact that such resentment can bring about the worst and prevent him from repenting, it will also be a cause of their own sorrow, for they will always suffer from their child’s situation.

The words of the Gaon, the Raavad z”l, apply not only regarding wayward children, but also regarding children who follow the ways of Hashem. For even with these, situations may arise in which they act in a way that displeases their parents, and such an act can serve as a cause to arouse anger and resentment.

Even then, parents must exert themselves to calm their hearts so that their resentment will not take effect upon their son. For sometimes such resentment can follow their children for a long time, even after the parents have long forgotten about it, and it can be the cause of various troubles and hardships for them. And the parents themselves suffer in the pain of their offspring.

And I can testify that I see this clearly: not once and not twice have parents come before me and bewailed the plight of their son who finds himself in distress or difficulty—sometimes it is a delay in finding a match, sometimes a delay in being blessed with children—and I advise them first to forgive their children completely for all the distress they ever caused them from the day of their birth. And after they comply with my advice, their child merits the salvation for which they longed...

May Hashem help that we should never have to face such difficult trials, and may we all merit only good children and descendants, faithful to Hashem and to His Torah, and may we merit to receive from them only abundant holy nachas.

גמ"ח שפע עליון
Gemach with'
abundance from
'Above

Everyone knows and says that when one marries off children, one sees a special Siyata Dishmaya (Heavenly assistance). I would be happy to share with the readers a part of the Siyata Dishmaya that we experienced at our most recent wedding.

What will be with my shtreimel that is no longer fit to wear for joyous occasions?

I thought of borrowing a shtreimel from a friend just for our celebration (to buy one was out of the question—it costs a fortune, about fifteen thousand shekels).

And behold, at some event, a friend approached me and asked if I needed a new shtreimel, and he requested that I try his on. It fit me like a groom on his wedding day.

He told me that every few years he buys a new shtreimel, and if I wanted, then in exchange for two thousand shekels I could take his.

I was very happy with this find. Two weeks later he called me and said that his new shtreimel had arrived and I was invited to come pick up the old one. When I arrived, he refused to take any payment and gave it to me as a complete gift, with the reasoning that he derives far more pleasure from giving a complete gift to a friend than he would from the few thousand shekels...

My shtreimel looked even more beautiful than the new one we bought for the groom!!!

There are many more such stories, but I chose to share at least this one in order to thank Hashem for His great goodness publicly!!!

ג.א.

In Memory of the Sainly Rav Binyamin Ze'ev Cheshin zt"l

On the occasion of the yahrzeit of the saintly and venerable gaon, Rav Binyamin Ze'ev [son of Rav Nechemiah] Cheshin zt"l — one of the heads of our yeshivah "Sha'arei HaShamayim," and among the elder men of lofty character and pure-minded members of the Sha'arei Chessed neighborhood in the holy city of Jerusalem — which falls on the 17th of Cheshvan (5749), we bring here a brief account concerning this aged and holy man, one of the most revered and respectable residents of Jerusalem.

What we recount is drawn from the words, writings, and discourses of our master and teacher, the saintly gaon shlita, who excels in relating for the later generations what he himself saw with his own eyes, heard with his own ears, and received from the righteous men of the previous generation — especially from the elders of Jerusalem, renowned for the greatness of their Torah and their awe of sin. Since hardly anyone today can relate with such depth and clarity the ways of those saintly elders of the previous era, these accounts bear special importance, that they may stand as a guide for the generations to come — to teach the ways of our holy forefathers in Jerusalem of old, that we may walk in their paths and cleave to their deeds, Amen.

Rav Binyamin Ze'ev Cheshin — known affectionately as Reb Velvel — was a man filled entirely with faith and trust in Hashem, suffused with holy vitality and constant joy. As one of the elder chassidei Breslov of Jerusalem, a sparkle of wit was ever on his lips, and the warmth of his fiery enthusiasm inspired all who drew near to him.

He was deeply attached, with all his heart and soul, to the holy Rav Nachman of Breslov zt"l, and he would constantly study his sacred writings.

In one of the conversations I had with him, he told me that some fifty years earlier, Jerusalem was suffering severe poverty and hunger. Because of the wars among the nations, the charitable funds from abroad — from the Kupas Rabbi Meir Ba'al HaNes — had almost completely ceased to arrive. The Jews of Jerusalem were crushed beneath the heavy burden of livelihood and want.

When the situation worsened, even the support for the famed Yeshivas Etz Chaim was discontinued. Seeing that his means of sustenance had collapsed and that there was no bread for his children, Rabbi Cheshin decided to travel abroad — to the lands beyond the sea — and to attempt to collect donations from the generous philanthropists of the Jewish people there.

After some inquiries, he resolved to travel to France, and specifically to the capital city, Paris. He had heard favorable reports about the wealthy Jews of that place, whose hearts were open to the needs of Am Yisrael, and who gave with a generous hand, especially for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the holy city, who were enveloped in hunger and distress.

Armed with several letters of endorsement from the great rabbis of Jerusalem, he set out on his long journey, boarding a ship bound directly for France.

Of that journey, Rav Cheshin himself testified to me that from the very beginning of his travels, his path was marked by great miracles and he saw open siyata diShmaya in every step.

He did not understand a single word of the French language. When I asked him how he dared to travel alone, without knowing even one word of the tongue of the land, the saintly man smiled and pointed to the sacred book Likkutei Moharan that lay before him, and said:

"With this holy book I set out on my journey; with it I crossed seas and rivers — and it was this book that accompanied me all the way!"

He related that upon his arrival there, he had no idea where to turn or to whom to turn, nor how he would request assistance without knowing the language of the people. Therefore, he went straight to the synagogue, and with the deep faith and trust that filled his heart, he offered a short prayer before Hashem for success in his mission. Immediately thereafter, he sat down to his study of the holy books — particularly his beloved Likkutei Moharan — as was his faithful habit.

And in truly wondrous ways, beyond all natural reasoning, he merited extraordinary success throughout that journey.

He once told me on a certain occasion, that on one Erev Shabbos, while hurrying about in preparation for the holy Shabbos, he slipped and fell, breaking his leg in a most severe fracture. He writhed in terrible pain, and the doctors declared that he would now have to remain confined to his bed for many weeks.

However, Rav Cheshin the tzaddik was of a different spirit. Being a veteran melamed dardekei—a

teacher of young children—for many years, he did not wish, chas veshalom, to interrupt his sacred labor, the holy work of teaching Torah.

(He himself testified before me that throughout all his decades of teaching Torah in Yerushalayim, he could not recall having missed even a single day!)

Therefore, he was deeply troubled and distressed at the thought that he might be forced to cease from his sacred duty. He increased his prayers and supplications before Hashem, and by the merit of the holy tzaddikim whose writings he constantly studied, he beseeched that he be granted healing and recovery, so that he could once again teach Bnei Yisrael Torah as his pure heart desired.

He related that after pouring out his heart like water in much prayer and supplication, he fell into a deep sleep on Shabbos Kodesh, sleeping for many hours. Upon awakening, he found himself as a completely different person, as if newly created. To the wonder and astonishment of the doctors, he arose and stood on both his feet like any healthy man. The very next day, Sunday morning, he was already seated as usual in his classroom, delivering his numerous lessons before his pupils—without having missed even a single day!

It was the custom of the venerable Rav Binyamin Ze'ev Cheshin zt"l to recount before bar mitzvah boys the following awesome story, teaching the obligation to guard the sanctity of the tefillin.

Once, in the city of Ostroh, a severe plague broke out. The city's Rav and his beis din decreed a fast day and a day of prayer. A public proclamation was issued by the beis din that anyone aware of any wrongdoing or spiritual deficiency in the city requiring correction was obligated to appear before them and report it, so that they might know what needed rectification in order to stop the terrible plague.

At that time there lived in Ostroh a Jewish man who was not accustomed to come to the beis k'nesses to daven. After the proclamation, two townsmen took it upon themselves to investigate and follow this man, to discover what his ways truly were. They began observing him throughout the day but found nothing improper. Yet, when they decided to follow him also by night, they saw that at midnight he arose from his bed, left his house, and walked a great distance outside the city.

Their curiosity was aroused, and they followed him silently so that he would not

perceive them. They saw him enter the depths of a great forest, shrouded in thick darkness, where he soon disappeared from sight. Overcome by fear, they returned to the city.

The next day they went before the gaavad (senior dayan) of the city and recounted in detail all that they had witnessed during the night, expressing their uncertainty about what this man could be doing in the heart of the forest at such a dark and fearful hour.

The Rav replied, "Leave the matter to me—I shall examine it myself." That night, at midnight, the Rav went together with several attendants and followed the man's footsteps into the forest.

Suddenly, they saw the man stop in a certain clearing. He sat upon the ground, lit a candle, placed ashes upon his head, and began reciting Tikkun Chatzos in a voice full of awe and broken-hearted weeping, until their hearts melted from the depth and sweetness of his lamentation.

But one thing astonished them greatly—they heard yet another voice, unknown to them, crying and reciting Tikkun Chatzos together with him, though no one else was visible. It was a wondrous thing to behold.

The Rav waited until the man concluded his prayers, and then emerged from his hiding place together with his attendants, standing before him. The Rav said, "Now we have seen with our own eyes that a holy man dwells among us. I wish to know, whose was that second voice that we heard reciting Tikkun Chatzos together with you?"

At first, the man tried to avoid answering, but the Rav, invoking his authority as mara de-asra (the halachic authority of the place), commanded him to speak the truth.

The man then said, "Since you heard that other voice, it is a sign that I must now tell you. My custom for many years has been to go out into the forest and mourn deeply over the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. In time, I was granted a gift from Heaven—that each night, as I sit upon the ground, Yirmiyahu HaNavi, peace be upon him, comes to say Tikkun Chatzos together with me, to lament the destruction of Yerushalayim. That is the second voice you heard."

The Rav asked, "Since you have merited such a lofty privilege, to recite Tikkun Chatzos together with Yirmiyahu HaNavi himself, why do you not pray with him to annul the terrible plague that is ravaging the city?"

The man promised the Rav that the next night he would ask Yirmiyahu HaNavi about it. The following morning, as the entire community gathered for Shacharis, and as they reached Baruch She'amar, suddenly the doors of the great beis k'nesses opened. The saintly hidden Jew entered, adorned with his tallis and tefillin.

Immediately upon his entrance, a great fear and trembling fell upon all the people, and several worshippers fainted. The man said nothing, but sat in his place and began his prayers. Throughout the service, a profound awe filled the beis k'nesses, with faintings occurring repeatedly.

After the prayer, the man removed his tefillin and approached the aged Rav to greet him with peace. The Rav returned his greeting warmly and asked him about the great fear that had overcome the upon his entrance, and why so many had fainted.

The man humbly replied, "The fear was not because of me, but because of the tefillin upon my head. Those who fainted did so because they looked upon these holy tefillin, concerning which the verse states (Devarim 28:10), וְרָאוּ כָּל עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ - And all the nations of the earth shall see that the name of Hashem is called upon you, and they shall fear you. The Ba'al HaTurim explains: The first letters of the words נֶשֶׁם ה' נִקְרָא spell 'shien'—referring to the letter shien upon the tefillin box."

(As we find similarly in Yoma 69a: When Shimon HaTzaddik the kohen gadol went forth to greet Alexander the Great, the king descended from his chariot and bowed before him. When his attendants asked, "A great king like you bows down to this Jew?" He answered, "The image of this man appears before me and triumphs in my battles.")

The Rav asked, "But everyone here also wears tefillin, and all the worshippers had tefillin upon their heads!"

The man replied, "There are many levels of sanctity in tefillin. These tefillin of mine have never once experienced any lapse of concentration (hesach ha-da'as). I have never spoken a single idle word while wearing them, nor allowed my mind to wander from their holiness. Therefore, they have become sanctified to such a degree."

The Rav then asked, "And what of the decree of the plague upon our city?"

The man replied, "Indeed, I asked Yirmiyahu HaNavi about it. He wept and said that forty years before the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, the decree had already been issued that it would be destroyed. Yet the reverence that Klal Yisrael showed for the Mikdash and for all batei k'nesses in Yerushalayim protected them. They would never engage in idle talk within those sacred places. As long as the sanctity of the Beis Hamikdash and the batei k'nesses was guarded, no enemy could harm them. But when that reverence was breached, and people began speaking idle words in those holy places, then the decree took hold, and the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed.

And so it is throughout all generations: whenever Israel guards the sanctity of the beis k'nesses—refraining from idle conversation and honoring its holiness—they are spared from harsh decrees and accusations."