



Seeing is Believing: Parshat Vayeirah

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

One of the seminal events in the formation of our people was *Akedat Yitzchak*, the binding of Yitzchak. After Hashem commanded Avraham to release Yitzchak and he offered a ram in his stead, Avraham named the place "*Hashem yireh*," God will see," as it says, "*Behar Hashem Yeiroeh*." (On the mountain Hashem will be seen.) This name, together with the previous name of *Shalem*, the kingdom of Malchizedek, form the name by which we know the place forever, *Yerushalayim*, Jerusalem.

In our liturgy, we constantly call upon Yerushalayim. We pray facing this place. For as the *Leket Imrei Kodesh* says, it is a magnet for our *tefillot*, the central portal through which our prayers rise up to heaven. What unique qualities can we attribute to this place that it is forever known both as the place Hashem will see and the place that Hashem will be seen, and how have Avraham Avinu's actions impacted these results?

Perhaps, as Rav Eliezer Azikari suggests in the haunting lines of *Yedid Nefesh*, the twofold name is the way we relate to Hashem. We want to draw closer To Him, but we cannot do it alone. So we ask "Draw me, Your servant, after Your will so that I may run like a ram and bow before Your glory." Perhaps the ram alludes to *Akedat Yitzchak*. Avraham ran to fulfill God's command, and then substituted the ram for Yitzchak although it wasn't required of him. So too we tell Hashem, "When we take the initiative to come closer to You and ask that You be revealed to us, that is proof that we truly want the intimate relationship with You." Rav Wolbe explains that Avraham's action exemplifies the essence of love. When one loves someone one wants

to give above and beyond what is expected. This desire is what cements a relationship, and is what Avraham exhibited when he searched for a way to offer God another gift. The Mikdash Halevi notes that Har Hamoriah retains its sanctity forever while Mount Sinai's sanctity was ephemeral. Avraham Avinu was an active participant in creating and maintaining the relationship between himself and *Hakodosh Boruch Hu*, as the Jews later were when they offered sacrifices in the *beit hamikdosh*. By contrast, as great as the experience at Mount Sinia was, we were passive onlookers.

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch uses this idea to highlight the difference between Man and animals. Animals receive their needs from a benevolent God without having to invest anything. Adam, however, was put into this world *leovdah uleshamrah*, to work it and protect it. Man has a responsibility of service to his Creator and to the world He created. Therefore he can achieve a greater level of intimacy with Him.

The Chayei Moshe notes that each name bears a different timestamp. During the time of the *beit hamikdosh*, the site was called *har habayit*, the mountain upon which the Temple stood. After the destruction, it became *makom*, a place. Avraham calls it the place God will see. He asks Hashem to allow His presence to rest here even when the *beit hamikdosh* no longer exists until *hayom*, the day when Moshiach will come and His presence will be revealed to all.

In the merit of the *akedah*, says Rav Hirsch, Israel was given the opportunity to offer the twice daily offering in the Temple. The sheep for these offerings was slaughtered to the

north of the altar, *tzafon*, the side which represents that which is *tzafun*, hidden. This signifies that even when things are hidden from us, when we feel alone and distant from Hashem, He is watching over us. The *Netivot Shalom* points out that this is the lesson of the *Akedah*. When things seem darkest, Hashem is right there beside us. On a personal level, exile is a sense of alienation and aloneness. Jews have survived unspeakable hardships, but the one thing they cannot bear is banishment from God's presence. Hashem says, *Anochi hasfer astir*. Even when I will hide My face, I will still be found there with you. During those dark times, we ask Hashem to shine His countenance upon us so that we may feel His presence. When we sense God holding our hand, life and its struggles take on a whole new dimension.

Holiness exists not only on the mountain but within each of us. As Rabbi Pincus reminds us, God said, "Build for Me a sanctuary that I may dwell within them, within the souls of Bnei Yisroel." Through personal dedication and toil in Torah and *mitzvot*, we build the sanctuary for His presence within ourselves. Self sacrifice for Hashem seldom means dying for His name; it means living according to His will. It's not just about doing the minimum requirement, says Rabbi Adler, but performing the *mitzvot* to the best of one's ability.

Rabbi Pincus notes that just as we guarded the physical edifice of the sanctuary against defilement, so too should we guard our inner spiritual sanctuary. By keeping our mouths pure, our hearts from covetousness, our eyes from impure images, we will retain the holiness within our souls and recognize His presence in our lives.

The Components of Hospitality

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hanoch Teller

The Ramban questions the literal meaning of the commandment, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Loving someone else as we love ourselves is almost impossible. For if we fulfilled this commandment to the letter of the law we would also have to grieve for everyone's sorrow just as we would grieve for our own. Hardly a day passes that we don't hear tragedies and suffering. Life would

become unbearable. Therefore one must define the commandment in terms of behavior rather than emotions. Sometimes parents will act in an abusive way to their children and then say in their defense, "I love my kids." This underscores the critical importance to define love in terms of deeds rather than feelings. It's the actions of a person that reflect where he's really at. It's impossible to expect masses of

people to feel unbounded love for others the way they feel for themselves. But what can be expected are acts of love and truly caring for someone's well-being.

The Torah specifically commands us to love our neighbor rather than humanity in general because it's often harder to love a neighbor whose faults we find annoying than to love

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people we've never met. The Sefer Chassidim notes that just as we love ourselves despite our faults, so too should we love our neighbor despite his faults. And just as we want other people to love us despite our faults, so too should we love other people despite their faults. It's not enough to act towards other people in a kind way. We have to really ask ourselves, am I acting towards this person the way I would want him to act towards me?

The Sefer Chassidim writes that a host should never do anything that would embarrass his guests. He should not ask Torah related questions or questions on any learned subject if he has reason to suspect his guest cannot offer a knowledgeable answer. If a guest doesn't have family, don't talk about family. A

host should be careful not to speak in a condescending manner. He should not flaunt his wealth thereby making someone of lesser means feel jealous. A proper host will think about the emotions of his guests. This applies not only in the home but in the car as well. Whenever I used to give a hitch to a yeshiva student, I would test him on what he was learning. After a while I decided that my behavior wasn't appropriate. The student might not know a good answer to the questions I was asking and would feel ashamed.

The Talmud attributes the destruction of the second *beit hamikdash* to an act of inhospitality. When the host found his arch enemy Bar Kamtza sitting at his party instead of his friend Kamtza, he threw him out. Bar Kamtza then

committed an act of vengeance that brought about the destruction of the temple and the exile of the Jewish people. The upshot of the story is that once a person is in your home, even if you don't like him, you must treat him politely. Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz questions the Gemara which says that Jerusalem was destroyed because of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza. Why was Kamtza guilty? He never even knew about the party. Rav Shmuelevitz explains that if your friend makes a *simcha* you shouldn't wait for an invitation. Had Kamtza not rested on his laurels and gone to the party, the whole problem might not have evolved. Rav Chaim taught by example that a Jew must be *noseh b'ol im chavero*. He must share in another Jew's joy and his misfortune as if it was his own.

Beginnig the Amida Part 1

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Ari Jacobson

The ideal time to daven the *Shachrit Shemonei Esrei* is at sunrise. If necessary, one can pray earlier, any time after daybreak which can be up to 72 minutes prior to sunrise. One can pray up until a third of the day, the end of the fourth *sha'a zmanit* (relative hour). The Gemara explains that there is a strong correlation between our *tefilot* and *korbonot*. Just as the latest time to bring the morning offering was at the end of the fourth hour, so too the *Shachrit* prayer follows this timing. Likewise, the daily afternoon offering which corresponds to *Mincha* was only brought until sunset. The burning of the remnants of the *korbonot* which relates to *Maariv* took place from evening until the next day.

There are some authorities like the Pri Megadim who rule that one can begin praying by the *zman* even if the prayers extend after the *zman*. However the Mishna Berura rules stringently that preferably one should try to finish praying by the end of the *zman*. If one could not pray the *Shachrit Shemonei Esrei* by the fourth hour, one can pray till *chatzot* (midday) although it is considered *tefilah*

shelo b'zmano and one only receives partial credit. If one intentionally missed *chatzot*, there's nothing one can do to make up *Shachrit*. But if one missed it due to pressing circumstances one could make it up at *Mincha* by praying two *Shemone Esreis*. So too one can make up *Mincha* with two *Maarivs*.

The Gemara writes that when one davens *Shemone Esrei* one should keep ones feet together based on the vision of Yechezkel who saw angels standing in this way. Some people stand with their feet together and their toes apart. Some Acharonim base this practice on the verse in Yechezkel, "*Kaf ragliehem k'kaf regel*," (And the soul of their feet was like the soul of a calve.) Just as cows have split hooves so too we keep our heels together and leave space between the toes. The requirement to keep ones feet together is distinct of the requirement to stand for *Shemone Esrei*. If one is on a plane or a bus and must sit for *Shemone Esrei* one should still keep one's feet together.

One take three steps back and three steps

forward before beginning *Shemone Esrei*. The Rokeach, and perhaps earlier sources, explain the idea of taking three steps forward as an extension of the Gemara, "*V'ragleihem regel yeshara*." Ragleihem equals two plus regel equals one which equals three steps. Another reason may be that it is as if one is approaching respectfully towards a king. We take three steps back in acknowledgement that however close we may eventually come to Hashem, we can never fully know Him.

We begin the *Shemone Esrei* with, "*Hashem sefasei tiftach*..." Hashem open my lips and allow my mouth to sing your praises. The Yaaras Devash notes that the lips guard that which goes in and out of one's mouth. If a person sins with his lips and then asks Hashem to open his gates which were never really sealed in the first place, it's hypocrisy. The point of beginning with "*Hashem sefasi*..." is to remind a person that he should generally be in a state where his lips are not moving incessantly and he must ask Hashem to open his lips.