

Parshat Veyeira: Honing Hospitality

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles
Summary by Channie Koplowitz-Stein

After Avraham Avinu fulfilled the *mitzva* of *brit milah*, Hashem came to visit him. Spotting three Arabs coming down the road, Avraham ran to invite them. The commentators ask, how could Avraham leave God's sacred presence to tend to these idol worshipers? It seems counterintuitive- after all the goal of *mitzvah* performance to form a connection to Hashem. It would seem that Avraham had now already reached that goal, writes the *Ben Melech*. However, the ultimate goal is to be achieved in *olam habo*. In this world we must continue to perform *mitzvot*, for that is how we greet the Divine Presence in this world, adds *Daas Torah*. When we realize this, notes Rabbi Goldstein, we begin to appreciate every opportunity to do a *mitzvah*, for it will no longer be available to us in the next world. The streets are lined with *mitzvot* if we but open our eyes to see, writes Rabbi Wolbe. We must train ourselves by doing more and more "small" *mitzvot* to develop a *mitzvah* mentality.

Avraham wanted to earn Hashem's presence through his own effort in performing a *mitzvah* rather than through Hashem's kindness, writes the *Ohel Moshe*. Leaving Hashem's presence to work on a *mitzvah* was not at all disrespectful then. *Mitzvah* is related to *tzavta*- connection. *Mitzvah* performance surrounds us with an aura of God's presence. While we understand this connection through the teachings of our Sages, how did Avraham Avinu arrive at this understanding?

Avraham knew his mission was to spread belief in and closeness to Hashem among the people. However, now having been circumcised, he was different from others not only philosophically and spiritually, but also physically. He was afraid this would keep others away from him, writes Rabbi M. Miller. Therefore, Hashem sent him these strangers

to raise his spirits and show him he could still communicate his message to others.

While Avraham was sitting, Hashem (so to speak) was standing nearby, teaching Avraham that although God is always present in a Jewish court of law, the judges are seated, giving their full attention to rendering proper judgment and not being distracted by the awe of God's presence. Hashem's presence is not meant to distract us from proper performance of *mitzvot*. Avraham thus understood that he was not disrespecting Hashem by going out to perform one of His *mitzvot*.

Rabbi Scheinerman quotes Rav Shach, that since every human being was created in God's image, we are not disrespecting God when we do acts of *chesed*, but respecting His image within the other human being and further honoring Hashem by emulating Hashem's *chesed* to us. In fact, adds Rabbi Beyfus, emulating Hashem is a continuous obligation, and we are not putting Hashem on hold, but clinging to Him. Just as the world was created through Hashem's *chesed*, so must we continue to uphold the world through *chesed*. When do *chesed*, we are actualizing the image of God within ourselves. When Avraham Avinu was greeting these guests, he was creating an even closer connection to Hashem.

Einei Yisroel notes that Hashem appeared to Avraham Avinu specifically through an act of *chesed* to teach us that we bring Hashem's presence to the world through our acts of *chesed*. Every time Avraham extended hospitality, he would bring recognition of Hashem to his guests' consciousness. He would impress upon them that everything he offered them was actually not his, but gifts from Hashem Himself.

After his bris, Avraham became a human

receptacle of Divine holiness writes the *Tosher Rebbe*. That's why Hashem initially kept impure people away from him. But Avraham was extremely distressed. When one can bring others to recognize their Creator, one is increasing Hashem's presence in the world. That's why one can take time from one's personal spiritual activities for the *mitzvah* of bringing others closer to Hashem. However, *Chochmat Hamatzpun* posts a caveat that this is only when no one else can perform that task.

The Ner Uziel writes that after his circumcision, Avraham's bond with Hashem intensified as he sensed Hashem's presence most keenly, basking in its joy. However, when the three strangers appeared, Avraham knew the right thing to do was to invite them in. One's relationship with others is not separate from, but an integral part of one's relationship to God.

With Avraham's heightened spiritual sensibility, he would see only that which was relevant to his spiritual growth adds the *Kedushas Zion*. If Avraham saw the men approaching, surely Hashem meant for him to approach them and offer them hospitality.

The Oshover Rebbe, citing the Shla"n Hakadosh writes that Avraham Avinu was having a tremendously elevated experience with Hashem and he felt a danger that he would become haughty. Taking care of guests in the most mundane ways would remind him that he himself was merely a guest in Hashem's house, living in this world by dint of his *chesed*. So too, we are all guests of Hashem, and the best way to feel the love and concern of our Host is to emulate His *chesed* and extend kindness to all who were created in His image.

Traveling the Journey of Life Tehilim 13 Part III

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

When we recognize that Hashem is with us in the process, it enables us to overcome our struggles. If we invest in the three areas mentioned-purity of action, speech, and heart, we will receive boundless assistance from Hashem. Hashem's help is defined in two ways – *chesed* and *tzedakah* (charity and kindness). What is the difference between them? Hashem created the world in a way that there would be free choice. The entity that makes it hard for us is a spiritual force. There is no way we would be able to overcome our bad inclination on our own. We must have divine help (*chesed*). If we invest effort, Hashem will give us added strength. He wants us to succeed and therefore He will give us more than we deserve (*tzedaka*). We must be a people who do not carry our souls in vain. We are on a higher level above the other nations. We have two divine powers, both good and bad inside of us. We have good character traits and the spirit of Hashem

inside of us that help us choose good. But we have to realize that the good inclination is not enticed unless we awaken it. And it must be so because if we would be enticed equally for good and bad, we wouldn't follow evil and there would be no free choice. We have to realize that we have the power inside of us to choose good and if we arouse it, even if we make a tiny step the size of a hole of a needle, Hashem will widen that to the size of a ballroom and we will receive endless *chesed* and *tzedakah*.

"This is the generation of those who seek him, those who strive for your presence..." An entire generation ascended from the 49 gates of impurity to the 49 gates of purity. "Raise up your heads, oh gates and be uplifted... raise up your head oh gates...He is the king of glory forever." The commentators explain that this refers to the gates of the heart, understanding, growth, and yearning to come closer to Hashem. We must open the gates so that it

should be everlasting, not just in the moment, and we are told twice to do so. In the first verse we speak about uplifting. In the beginning as we begin to climb the path to avodat Hashem it may be difficult. We need Hashem's help. But during the second stage when the gates are raised, it becomes much easier and we can now do it ourselves. We can then move on to a higher level of serving Hashem with love.

Free choice is a riddle. It's otherworldly, beyond logic. Yet Hashem created us with the ability to tap into the spiritual force inside ourselves, overcome the *yetzer hara*, and come to a point where Hashem's will becomes natural for us. In order to get there, we have to be ready to say, "Raise up your gates. I want to go higher. I'll see the wonders of Hashem in the very process of free choice." And this will give us the strength to go forward and win the battle.

Melechet Kotev Temporary Writing Part III

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Shimon Isaacson

There seems to be a total uniformity between *Hilchot Gittin* and *Hilchot Shabbat*. However, the Rambam differs. He writes that for a get to be kosher it must be written with long lasting ink, however the surface can be temporary such as writing on a leaf. This is very striking especially in light of the formulation of the *Baalei Hatosfot*. When *Tosfot* looked at the *Mishna* in *Shabbat*, and this is what *Haghas Maimonos* points out, *Tosfot* didn't understand alim as any kind of leaf but rather specifically referring to olive leaves, which are long lasting. However, the Rambam writes this is in a much more general way in *Hilchot Gittin*. He doesn't write *alei zayit* but *alim* which would seem to suggest that one could write on a surface that will not last. However, when it comes to *Hilchot Shabbat* the Rambam is stringent and rules that the surface must be long lasting for a person to be *chayiv*. Perhaps one can suggest that according to

the Rambam maybe there is a fundamental difference between *Hilchot Shabbat* and the rest of the *Torah*. In *Hilchot Shabbat* the concern is not so much the actual process of writing but rather the results. If the result is flimsy, then by definition it's not *melechet machshevet* which would require it to be long lasting and one would not be *chayiv kotev*. This is not true when it comes to *gittin* says the Rambam. There, the concern is not the result but the actual writing. The ink must have a capacity to last because that is the definition of *ketiva*. But the paper or surface which must be there for the giving of the get, doesn't have to have lasting duration. The *Baalei Hatosfot* and the *Rashba* differ with the Rambam and the *Ran* and rule that there is uniformity between *Hilchot Shabbat* and *Hilchot Gittin*. You need bonafide writing both in the act of writing and the results.

This distinction between *kiyum kol haTorah* versus *Melechet Shabbat* would seem to be indicated from another Rambam as well. When it comes to the *melacha* of *tofer* (sewing), the *Mishna* tells us, one must sew two stitches be *chayiv*. The *Gemara* in *Shabbat* adds that two stitches is not enough to be *chayiv*. One must also tie them together. The *Rishonim* ask, if that's the case why would this not be considered violating the *melacha* of *kosher*? If the knot isn't tied the stitches will not last. This is exactly what the *Gemara* says- tying the two ends will make it last which will render the person doing the act *chayiv*. The Rambam brings this down and says clearly -one is only *chayiv* for sewing two stitches if the knot is tied at the end. The Rambam does add that if one sews more stitches, which would make the other stitches long lasting, no knot would be needed to render a person *chayiv*.