LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

Our sages learn from here that the mitzvah of greeting and hosting guests is greater than the mitzvah of speaking with the Shechina. -- Gemara Shabbos 127a

In Nesivos Shalom, the Slonimer Rebbe helps us analyze why this should be so. We should not be surprised when a person happily and graciously hosts his good friend. It is a magnanimous gesture of goodwill and kindness, and the visit will be spent in an enjoyable and comfortable manner. Yet, when a person hosts the son of his friend, the visit will not automatically be so warm and jovial as it would be with the friend himself. However, if the friendship was exceptionally strong, the natural feelings of bonding that the host had with the father would overflow and this closeness would be expressed fully toward the son.

When a Jewish person is visiting an unfamiliar community, we have the privilege and opportunity to greet him as a member of Hashem’s chosen children, and as a family member in our nation. We are all children of our Father in heaven, and our expressions of closeness, as manifest in our genuine desire to host him and see to his needs, attest to the love of Hashem which burns within our hearts. This demonstrates our love for Hashem to a degree which is greater than if we showed the same interest when “hosting” the Shechina itself.

AWARE OF THEIR NEEDS

In Kedushas Levi, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Bardichev notes several items that need explanation. 1) Why did Avraham say “a bit of water”? Was Avraham stingy with such a basic commodity such as water? 2) Why did he instruct others to bring the water? After all, he brought the bread himself. Why did he not bring the water himself as well? 3) Why did Avraham tell the visitors that after they finish eating they should leave? That seems to be a bit rude. He should have extended the invitation to stay the day or as long as they wanted.

The answer may lie in Avraham Avinu’s keen understanding of people’s needs. People who are traveling are very conscious of and often pressed for time. They are always eager to be on their way to their destination. An extended meal might be more of an imposition upon them than a benefit. The food may not be worth the time. Avraham therefore said, “I am having a bit of water brought out to you [from the pitcher inside the tent, not from the well, which would take extra time], and while the water is being brought, I’ll go get some bread [again economizing on time], and I won’t hold you up in idle conversation. Just as soon as you are finished eating, I’ll send you on your way.”

Avraham Avinu had a keen understanding of people’s needs.
IT WAS NO SURPRISE

In Noam Elimelech, Rabbi Elimelech of Lizensk explains that a tzaddik is one who recognizes the involvement of Hashem in all that he sees. The righteous detect the direct hand of Hashem in all they observe to the extent that when they witness a miracle, they are not surprised nor overwhelmed. It is very clear that Hashem is capable of performing great wonders without bounds, so that it is no surprise to the trained observer when such events occur. In fact, if someone is shocked or astonished upon seeing a miracle, this amazement is an expression of minimizing the abilities of Hashem. Did the person really think that Hashem was incapable of such intervention? Why is he so startled? We also find a Gemara (Berachos 33b) that relates an incident about someone who led the prayers in the presence of Rabbi Chanina. He expanded upon the praises of Hashem, as he listed no less than eleven accolades of Hashem's attributes. When he finished, Rabbi Chanina chastised him, “Have you now completed all the praises of God?” We see, once again, that true recognition of Hashem’s omnipotence encompasses a realization that His abilities are limitless.

Sarah heard that she was to give birth at the age of ninety. Her response to this news was that she experienced an inner feeling of happiness, to the point that she was amused and happy that Hashem would miraculously restore her youth to her. God turned to Avraham and asked, “Why is it that Sarah laughed? Is it even true that I shall give birth, though I have aged?” Bereshis 18:12-14

God regularly controls nature and manipulates it as a matter of fact.

A MOMENT OF CONFRONTATION

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With whom did Avraham wage battle in this particular encounter? Avraham Avinu was exceptionally humble, as he said about himself (v. 27), “I am but dust and ash.” As such, he felt it difficult to approach Hashem and to daven on behalf of Sodom. In fact, we do not find any incident where Avraham davened on his own behalf. The Zohar even indicates that although Lot, Avraham’s own nephew, was residing in Sodom, Avraham did not daven specifically on his behalf to save him. It seems that Avraham considered direct intervention by prayer as a grave matter, and he was reluctant to intervene due to his extreme humility.

Sfas Emes teaches that we can view the confrontation in our verse as one between Avraham and his own self. He was torn as to whether to daven in this situation, until his compassion for the people of Sodom finally convinced him to approach Hashem. We can fully understand and interpret the words of the Torah which report that Avraham felt himself to be as dust and ash not just as introductory remarks, but as part of the prayer itself. Avraham was claiming that although he was merely as dust and ash, and as such he felt a great reluctance to approach Hashem and to daven, nevertheless he was able to overcome his reluctance and allow his compassion to dominate. When it was necessary to pray on behalf of others, he simply could not let these people down by not doing his utmost to save them.
Similarly, Avraham summoned the infinite compassion of Hashem, who is the Father of all Compassion, to become prominent and active.

AN APPROPRIATE MEASURE

Shem MiShmuel explains that the manner in which Sodom was destroyed was patterned after the way in which the people sinned, an example of the divine method of קֵדֶם גֶּדֶר קֶדֶר – measure for measure. The world was created based upon the principle of kindness and sharing – "עֹלֶלֶל חָסֹדֶן וְעֹלֶלֶל קֶנֶּה". One of the foundations of the world was for mankind to use its ingenuity and insight to help and assist each other, and in this way to perfect himself and the universe. When the people of Sodom not only acted violently and with cruelty towards each other, but also institutionalized these distorted beliefs, they overturned and reversed the order of creation. Thus, the appropriate response to their perverse teachings and corrupt actions was that they suffered the fate of being literally “turned over”.

WHEN RULES ARE MADE BY MAN

When Avraham went down to Gerar with his wife, Sarah, he asked her to say that she is his sister, so that they would not kill him in order to take his wife. Therefore, Sarah was taken for the king, Avimelech. However, Hashem came to Avimelech in a dream and told him that he cannot have her, as she is a married woman, and he must return her to her husband, Avraham. Avimelech summoned Avraham and asked him, indignantly, why he had lied to him and his nation about the true identity of his wife. They were not like the uncultured, barbaric nations, who had no morals. This was a cultured, civilized society!

The Malbim says that Avraham was, indeed, willing to admit that this was a society of culture, laws, and rules – a very civilized society. However, Avraham said that there was one thing missing – the fear of Hashem. When the fear of Hashem is lacking, when the rules come only from man, then there is no guarantee as to what may happen, no matter how civilized the people may seem. Therefore, Avraham was not willing to take any chances in such an environment.

Rav Elchonon Wasserman echoed such a message in the decade that preceded the rise to power of Nazi Germany. He said that it is true that Germany appears to be a moral, cultured, and civilized nation. However, he warned the Jews not to take that to mean that it is a safe place to be, for when the fear of Hashem is lacking, anything can happen. Moral ideals created by man can quickly change, as man chooses to change them. The highly “moral and civilized” Germany became a place of barbaric, inhumane terror. Without the fear of Hashem, there is no real morality, nothing that will not change with the whims of man’s limited thinking and lack of direction.

Halachic Corner

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According to the Gaon of Vilna

Krias Shma:

- Saf: 8:8
- Tfilis: 9:57
- Saf: 6:41
- Saf: 4:29

According to the Magen Avraham

Krias Shma:

- Saf: 8:32
- Tfilis: 9:33
- Saf: 6:41
- Saf: 4:29

The mitzvah of Bikur Cholim, visiting the sick, which is highlighted at the beginning of our parasha, is considered to be an act of chesed. One should schedule a visit at a time that would be convenient for the patient. If possible, one should try to visit at a time when there are no other visitors, so that the choleh will have someone with whom to converse and will not become depressed because he is alone. One should avoid staying too long, for this may become tiresome or burdensome to the patient. However, if it would be beneficial to the patient, or if the patient himself requests the extended visit, then one may stay longer. Some authorities maintain that it is better to visit together with another person in order to better attend to the choleh and to give him encouragement. One should enter the patient’s room slowly. The visitor should display an air of good cheer and an aura of confidence and hope in the recovery of the choleh in order to boost his spirits. One should avoid entering with an expression of fear for the condition of the choleh, for this could sadden the patient and intensify his own apprehensions. One should prepare in advance some topics to discuss so that the conversation will flow and there will not be the discomfort of long periods of silence. In essence, it is better to distract the patient with light conversation or any other means that would bring him pleasure.
Questions for Thought and Study

1. What were the names of the three מִלִּמְתֵּשָׁה (angels) who visited Avraham and Sarah? How do we know this? See Ba’al HaTurim 18:2
2. Why did all of the מִלִּמְתֵּשָׁה ask about Sarah, yet only one informed them that Sarah would have a child? See Ohr HaChaim 18:10
3. Why did Avraham specifically denigrate himself after his discussion regarding Sodom by saying that he was כֶּסֶף וַאָדָם (“dust and ash”)? See Rabbeinu Bachya 18:27
4. Why did Hashem say specifically that the righteous people who could save Sodom had to be בֶּצֶח (“in the midst of the city”)? Where else would they be?
   See Ramban and Ibn Ezra to 18:26
5. How do we know that the וּלָקַחְתֵּכָה were concerned about the kashrus in Lot’s house? See Ohr HaChaim 19:3
6. How do we know that there was a “baby boom” when Sarah became pregnant with Yitzchak?

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• By the students of Jewish Theological College rabbinical students (regulars & fellows) of the Beis Midrash, and his wife Phyllis on the birth of a grandson, born to Yehoshua & Talia Garden; to HTC Board of Regents member Michael Klein, and his wife Naomi on the birth of a grandson, born to Chaim & Shana Klein; and to HTC Board of Governors member Alan Cohen and his wife Leah with Baruch Sussman; Wed.- YU Torah Mitzion Kollel - Rabbi Yossi Katz; Thurs.- TBD. Info: 312-984-1041.

Halachic Corner is dedicated by Benyomin Freeman in memory of his father Gedalia Freeman, z”l. May his memory be for a blessing.

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Join us at the Joan Dachs Bais Yaakov - Yeshivas Tiferes Txvi Nursery Open House! Visit our beautiful nursery building at 6106 N. California Avenue, from 10:00-11:30 on Thursday, November 28. Parking will be available across the street in the Clinton parking lot. Looking forward to seeing you there!

Register now! Nefesh-Chicago Nov. 17th Professional Training with co-founder of Mind-Focused Therapy, Dr. Robert Lebovits, a highly-respected Nefesh Int'l member, back by popular demand, presenting on “The Delivery Treatment for Couples & Families” (a topic heavily requested by MHPs). Earn 3 or 6 CEUs/CPEUs. Morning or afternoon session or both! To register online & program info: https://nefeshchicago.org/register/ or arrive at the WiFi Building at 8:45 AM for registration at the door. Various pricing options available.

Dollars & Sense Workshop - How Much Money One Needs for a Successful Aliyah. Join Nefesh B’Nefesh, Ely Cole, CPA at XPAT Tax Services, and Dr. Anjony Sco, Wealth Manager at Pioneer Wealth Management, for a practical workshop on budgeting, US and Israeli taxation, and financial planning. This Monday, November 18, 2019, from 7:00-9:00 PM, at the DoubleTree by Hilton Chicago North Shore - Skokie. Kindly register at www.nbn.org.il/chicago.

The Lubin Family invites the entire community to a Siyum Sefer Torah in loving memory of Mrs. Eloise Lubin - יום תavo ר’ ז’ב מכם מיכ体育彩票י, this Sunday, November 17, 12:00 PM. Completion Ceremony 1:00 PM. Procession from the Lubin home, 6508 N. Whipple Street, to Congregation Bnei Ruven. For more information visit: chabadcares.com/torah.

Save the date! Hanna Sacks Bais Yaakov is pleased to announce their 57th Annual Dinner. Please join us on Tuesday, January 14, 2020, at the Bryn Mawr Country Club, as we pay tribute to Mordey and Mindy Lebovics – The Ambassador Award – and to Chaya Kornh Lev V’Nefesh Award. For further information please call 773-338-9222 ext. 11 or email banquet@hsby.org.

Please come meet the rabbanit Dr. Esther Fisher at the home of Allen and Edie Chernoff – learn Torah and hear about Ein HaNatziv’s post-high school Israel program for girls. This Saturday night, November 16, at 8:00 PM, at 8951 Lincolnwood Drive.

Please join Ohel Tefilla for a Chanukas HaBayis and Hachnasas Sefer Torah, dedicated in memory of Donna Feldman, ר“ת, this Sunday, November 17th, 1:45 PM, leaving from 2929 West Coyle and going to 2733 West Touhy. Live music and pekalach!

Rabbi Shmuel Fuert, שלמה, is continuing to present the Special Topic of: “Pesakim which I personally discussed with Rav Elyashiv, אהל, in Hilchos Niddah”, at his regular Sunday morning shiur. This weekly shiur (for men) in contemporary & wide-ranging Halachic issues meets Sunday mornings at 9:30 at Agudath Israel in Peterson Park, 3541 Peterson, 9-15:10-15. Complimentary light breakfast provided. Catch up on last week’s special shiur, & Rabbi Fuert’s previous Sunday morning shiurim, at TorahAnytime.com!

The entire community is invited to join Congregation Shaarei Tzedek Mishkan Yair, Parashas Chayei Sarah, November 22-23, for our Shabbos of Chizuk with Rabbi Henoch Plotnik: Friday night Oneg at the home of Yishai and Bluma Broner, 2928 W. Estes, at 8:00 PM, and Seudah Shelishis at Chayei Sarah, November 22-23, for our Shabbos of Chizuk with Rabbi Henoch Plotnik: Friday night Oneg at the home of Yishai and Bluma Broner, 2928 W. Estes, at 8:00 PM, and Seudah Shelishis at Chayei Sarah, 2832 W. Touhy Avenue, following 3:55 PM Mincha.

Hillel Torah’s Early Childhood Program invites current and prospective families to our Sunday Funday! Preschool and Kindergarten children and their parents are invited to a fun-filled morning Sunday, December 1, from 10:00-11:30 AM, at our preschool campus, 8825 East Prairie in Skokie. Join us for a morning of experiential and interactive Chanukah-related activities, led by our engaging and talented teachers. Info: margot.parnass@hilleltorah.org.

Hillel Torah’s Annual Dinner this Monday night! Join us as we honor Kate Kramer with the New-Gen Award and the memory of Hilda Rapoport, ר“ת. Come and meet the AMIT Ambassadors who will be joining us from Israel. Save the date for AMIT’s Chanukah Boutique, Sunday, December 1, at Or Torah. For more information, call the AMIT office at 847-677-3800.

The Net Foundation and Ohel Shalom Torah Center are pleased to announce the first lecture of Rabbi Daniel J. Raccach’s Personalities in the Bible series for this winter season, titled: “Reuven: The First Born”, to be held ר“תו this Motza’ai Shabbat, November 16th, at 7:30 PM, at Ohel Shalom, 2949 W. Touhy. Please join us. The next Shiur will ר“תו be on November 23rd.
4. Answers:
a. In English, "and behold three" are numerically equal to 1091, indicating that these were the three brothers. 
b. It is common courtesy to ask about the welfare of one’s wife (see Bava Metzia 87a), so all of the ask. It was the mission of only one of the the children to inform them regarding the birth of Yitzchak, so only one did so. 
c. Hashem praised Avraham by consulting with him regarding the destruction of Sodom and Amora. Avraham denigrated himself to counteract any sense of haughtiness he might feel due to his direct communication with Hashem. 
d. Ibn Ezra says that these righteous people had to be righteous in public and could not be hidden within the city. Ramban says that these righteous people could even be not native to the city (such as Lot) as long as they were currently residing in the city. 
e. Pasuk 19:3 indicates that despite Lot and his family preparing a big feast for them, the pasuk only ate the pasuk only the kashrus of the matzos as they saw that Lot himself prepared them and separated the pasuk prepared the pasuk. Another explanation is that the pasuk considered themselves like Kohanim and they could receive the appropriate pasuk. Another explanation is that it was the night of Pesach and they knew that the matzos, so they trusted his direct communication with Hashem. 
f. The words "recieved the appropriate pasuk" are considered numerically equivalent (1090), according to the rules of Gematria, to 1091 ("even all those who are barren He remembered") (1091), indicating that miraculously all barren women were cured through the merit of Sarah.

Prepared by Rabbi Ben-Zion Rand, Editor, and Mrs. Naomi Samber, Managing Editor

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