

ל'חמשה

The climax of this week's *Parashah* is the *Akeidah* / binding of Yitzchak. The Torah relates (22:2), "He (*Hashem*) said, 'Please take your son, your only one, whom you love--Yitzchak--and go to the land of Moriah; bring him up there as an offering upon one of the mountains that I shall tell you.'" The very next *Pasuk* begins: "So Avraham woke up early in the morning..."

R' Chaim Friedlander z"l (1923-1986; *Mashgiach Ruchani* of the Ponovezh Yeshiva) writes: This verse demonstrates Avraham's faith and his commitment to fulfilling the Will of G-d. *Hashem* commanded Avraham to bring his beloved son as an offering, so what did Avraham do? Since the verse tells us that Avraham "woke up," we can infer that he slept. He made sure to get some sleep so he would have the strength and focus to perform the *Mitzvah* properly. Not only that, he had enough peace of mind to sleep; he did not lay awake all night worrying about what the next day would bring.

R' Friedlander writes further: A similar level of faith and trust was demonstrated by Chizkiyahu, king of Yehuda. Yerushalayim was under siege by the Assyrian general, Sancheirev (see *Melachim II* ch.19). Chizkiyahu knew, say our Sages, that he and his subjects had insufficient merits to defeat Sancheirev's 185,000 troops in a conventional battle. Instead, say our Sages, Chizkiyahu prayed, and then he went to sleep. Sure enough (*ibid.* verse 35), "It was that very night--an angel of *Hashem* went out and struck down one hundred eighty-five thousand of the Assyrian camp," Sancheirev fled, and Yerushalayim was saved. (*Siftei Chaim: Mo'adim II* p. 431)

Yayera נ"ו

Shabbat

R' Zvi Yisrael Thau *shlita* (founder of Yeshivat Har Ha'mor in Yerushalayim) writes, based on the teachings of R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l (1865-1935; first *Ashkenazic* Chief Rabbi of *Eretz Yisrael*): *Shabbat's* testimony about the Creation of the world includes within it "testimony" that the world will eventually be perfected. (Obviously, *Hashem*, Who is perfect, would not have created the world only to leave it a mess!) This explains why, for example, much of the hymn *Lecha Dodi* that we sing or recite on Friday night is about the future redemption, not directly about *Shabbat*.

There are two ways to understand the relationship between the present and the future, continues R' Thau. One could understand, simply, that the present has meaning because it is the road that leads to the future. According to this understanding, our *Shabbat* observance, Torah study, and *Mitzvah* performance uplift the world and bring it closer to its ultimate perfection. This understanding is not wrong, writes R' Thau.

But there is a deeper understanding, R' Thau writes. *Hashem* is above time, so the perfect future already exists, and its "light" enlightens our world. When our Sages say, "*Shabbat* is a taste of *Olam Ha'ba* / the World-to-Come," they do not mean only that *Shabbat* foreshadows what we will experience in the future. Rather, on *Shabbat*, we experience the *Olam Ha'ba* that already exists. Through our *Shabbat* observance, the world is uplifted today to its future level. (*Am Mekadeshei Shevi'i* p.39)

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"It happened after these things that *Elokim* tested Avraham . . ." (22:1)

R' Moshe ben Nachman *z"l* (*Ramban*; 1194-1270) writes: The "test" is only from the perspective of the one being tested. (*Hashem* knows what the outcome will be.) The reason that *Hashem* "tests" a person is to enable a person actualize his potential, so that he can be rewarded for his good deeds, not just for having a good heart. [Until here from *Ramban*]

R' Yerucham Levovitz *z"l* (*Mashgiach Ruchani* of the Mir Yeshiva; died 1936) explains: The essence of Creation, we are taught (*Yeshayah* 43:7), is the revelation of *Hashem's* honor. *Hashem* did not change when He created the world, and His honor existed before as it does now. But in the absence of a world, *Hashem's* honor was hidden, not revealed. For this reason, Kabbalists call our world, "The world of revelation." [Of course, *Hashem* does not have a need to be revealed, but for reasons unknown and unknowable to us, that is His Will.]

It follows, continues R' Levovitz, that as long as a person's potential for performing a meritorious act is not realized, it is not "in this world." This answers those who argue: "Why must I perform *Mitzvot*? It is sufficient that I am a good Jew in my heart!" (*Shevivei Da'at: Rosh Hashanah* p.234)

"He said, 'Please take your son, your only one, whom you love--Yitzchak--and go to the land of Moriah; bring him up there as an offering upon one of the mountains that I shall tell you.'" (22:2)

R' Avraham Mordechai Alter *shlita* (Yerushalayim; grandson of the previous *Gerrer Rebbe*) writes: Avraham Avinu is the paradigm of a person who practices *Chessed* / kindness. Every insight and interpretation that commentaries throughout the ages have shared about the trait of *Chessed*, Avraham practiced. *Chessed* was his life's work.

Suddenly, G-d commanded Avraham to bring Yitzchak as a sacrificial offering--the *Akeidah*. Here Avraham was instructed to do something that was the antithesis of *Chessed*!

Had Avraham practiced *Chessed* because it was part of his personal value system, he would not have been able to pass the test of the *Akeidah*, writes R' Alter. But Avraham recognized that there is no inherent value to *Chessed*--or any other trait, for that matter. Rather, the Torah's value system is defined solely by whether something is G-d's will.

Notably, adds R' Alter, the location where the *Akeidah* took place later became the site of the *Bet Hamikdash* / the Holy Temple. People have different visions of what holiness looks like--be it studying Torah for hours on end, praying fervently, or performing great acts of *Chessed*. The siting of the *Bet Hamikdash* teaches us that real holiness is subjugating oneself to *Hashem's* will, as Avraham did in this place. (*Emet Ve'da'at* p.29-30)

"*Hashem* appeared to him in the plains of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day." (18:1)

Rashi z"l explains: Avraham was sitting at the entrance of his tent to see whether anyone was passing by who he could invite into his home. [Until here from *Rashi*]

R' Gedaliah Silverstone *z"l* (1871-1944; rabbi in Belfast, Ireland and Washington, D.C.) adds: Avraham sat "in the heat of the day," reflecting that just as the sun provides light and heat to every person without discrimination, so he should invite any passerby into his home without inquiring whether the person was important enough to be his guest. This, writes R' Silverstone, is the model we follow when we say at the *Pesach Seder*: "Whoever is hungry, let him come and eat." It makes no difference who he is.

(*Haggadah Shel Pesach Korban Pesach* p.5)

"And *Hashem* said, 'Am I concealing from Avraham what I am doing? . . . For I know him, that he commands his children and his household after him that they keep the way of *Hashem*, doing charity and justice . . .'" (18:17, 19)

R' Moshe Sofer *z"l* (1762-1839; rabbi and *Rosh Yeshiva* in Pressburg, Hungary) explains: Many of the later prophets--for example, *Yeshayah*, *Yirmiyah*, and *Yechezkel*--prophesied about the fates of other nations. Indeed, *Yirmiyah* is told at the outset (*Yirmiyah* 1:5), "I have made you a prophet regarding the nations."

Avraham did not reach the level of those prophets, but not because he was unworthy. Rather, Avraham's preoccupation with spreading knowledge of *Hashem* to others prevented him from meditating on lofty matters, which is a prerequisite to attaining a higher level of prophecy. Therefore, *Hashem* said, "Am I concealing from Avraham what I am doing--i.e., destroying S'dom?" Avraham would have seen this prophetically were he not so busy instructing his children and household to follow in My ways, so it is only right that I inform him. (*Chatam Sofer*)

R' Yitzchak Hutner *z"l* (1906-1980; *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshiva Chaim Berlin in Brooklyn, N.Y.) writes: Mankind is the only being whose creation was preceded by an announced plan, "Let us make . . .!" Indeed, the fact that man was created in this way left its imprint on his nature. Specifically, says R' Hutner, that is why man feels deep satisfaction when one of his plans comes to fruition, even when the subject matter of the plan is not something particularly momentous.

R' Hutner continues: Avraham was the first person who worked on returning the world to the state before Adam's sin--i.e., to the condition *Hashem* planned when He said, "Let us make man!" Therefore, it was only fitting that *Hashem* should inform Avraham of His current plan.

(*Ma'amarei Pachad Yitzchak: Sukkot* 105)