

ל'חמץ

Yayera X77

R' Eliyahu Capsali z"l (1490-1555; rabbi of Candia, Crete) applies to our Patriarch Avraham the verse (*Mishlei* 15:4), "A healing tongue is a tree of life." He writes:

*Midrash Sefer Ha'bahir* teaches: The Attribute of *Chessed* / Kindness said, "All the days that Avraham lived, I did not need to perform my task, for Avraham stood in my place and guarded my watch. My role is to bring merit to the world. Even if mankind deserves punishment, I bring them merit and turn their hearts to do the will of their Father in Heaven. All this, Avraham did, as it is written (21:33), 'He planted an *Eshel* in Be'er Sheva, and there he proclaimed the Name of Hashem, *Kel* of the Universe'." (*Rashi* z"l cites two explanations of "*Eshel*"--either it was an orchard to supply fruit for guests, or it was an inn for lodging in which there were many kinds of fruit.)

The *Gemara* (*Bava Batra* 16b) relates: A pearl hung from Avraham's neck, and anyone who was ill looked at it and was cured immediately. When Avraham passed away, Hashem took this pearl and hung it from the sun [Until here from the *Gemara*]. R' Capsali explains: The "pearl" is the Torah, which illuminates the world like a shiny jewel. It "hung from Avraham's neck"--meaning that he used his throat to speak sweet and inspiring words. "Anyone who was ill" refers to people with spiritual ailments, who would hear Avraham's words and be cured. After Avraham passed away, one can get similar inspiration from the sun, as we read (*Tehilim* 19:2), "The heavens declare the glory of *Kel*."

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## Shabbat

**"Whoever sanctifies the *Shabbat* as befits it, whoever safeguards the *Shabbat* properly from desecration, his reward is exceedingly great . . ." (From the Friday night *Zemer* "*Kol Mekadesh*")**

R' Aharon Levy *shlita* (Yerushalayim) notes that our Sages list many different rewards for one who observes *Shabbat*. These include:

- He will be saved from three troubles: the birth-pangs of the days of *Mashiach*, the day of *Gog U'Magog* [see *Yechezkel* 37:18], and the day of the Great Judgment [see *Malachi* 3:23] (*Midrash Mechilta*);
- He will merit to have wealth (*Shabbat* 119a);
- He will be able to make decrees and have Hashem fulfill them (*Midrash Shmot Rabbah*);
- Hashem will forgive all his sins (*Midrash Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer*); and
- He will be distanced from sinning (*Midrash Mechilta*).

R' Levy continues: *Midrash Yalkut Shimoni* points out a contrast between how a mortal king rewards his soldiers and how Hashem rewards those who serve Him--specifically, those who observe *Shabbat*. When a king gives his soldiers a day off, he does not feed them on that day. In contrast, Hashem has given us a day of rest--*Shabbat*--and He gives us a double portion on the day before, as it is written (*Shmot* 16:22), "It happened on the sixth day that they gathered a double portion of food." This, writes R' Levy, is the meaning of the verses (*Bereishit* 2:2-3), "He abstained on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. *Elokim* blessed the seventh day." "He abstained from all His work--He made it a day of rest. Even so, He blessed the seventh day--He "pays" us for resting on that day. (Azamer B'shvachin p.61)

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**"Then Yitzchak spoke to Avraham his father and said, 'Father --' And he said, 'Here I am, my son.' And he said, 'Here are the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the offering?' And Avraham said, 'Elokim will seek out for Himself the lamb for the offering, my son.' And the two of them went together." (22:7-8)**

R' Aryeh Leib Zunz-Charif z"l (Poland; 1765-1833) notes that these verses seem to unnecessarily wordy. Why, for example, is it significant that Yitzchak addressed Avraham as "Father" and Avraham addressed him in return as "My son"? Also, why are we told again (after it was written in verse 6) that "the two of them went together"?

R' Zunz explains: It is well known that Avraham excelled in the trait of *Chessed* / Kindness, while Yitzchak excelled in the trait of *Gevurah* / Firmness. Here, at the *Akeidah* / Binding of Yitzchak, Avraham was called upon to step out of his familiar role and to adopt Yitzchak's trait. Yitzchak therefore questioned him: "Are you not my father, whose trait is *Chessed*?" Avraham answered, "My son! Today I must adopt your trait."

Yitzchak, on the other hand, needed to adopt Avraham's trait. *Chessed* is associated with love, and it was Yitzchak's great love for *Hashem* that allowed him to submit himself to be offered as a sacrifice. Thus, says that verse, "The two of them went together"--Avraham with Yitzchak's trait, and Yitzchak with Avraham's trait.

Alternatively, R' Zunz writes, we may explain as follows: Our Sages relate that the scoffers of the generation asserted that Yitzchak was the son of the Plishti king Avimelech (see *Rashi* to *Bereishit* 25:19). After all, they claimed, Sarah had lived with Avraham for decades and never had a child, but after one night in Avimelech's palace, she did become pregnant! Therefore Yitzchak said to Avraham, "You are my father! But, if you kill me, will that not prove to the scoffers that I am not your child?" Avraham answered, "To the contrary! If you were not of pure stock, *Hashem* would not accept you as an offering. This will prove that you are my son."

(Kometz Ha'minchah: Parashat Shemini)

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R' Capsali continues: Alternatively, the "sun" can refer to Moshe Rabbeinu. Just as the sun gives light, and its light is unequalled by other heavenly bodies, so Moshe's wisdom radiated like light and his "light" was unequalled, as we read (*Devarim* 34:10), "Never again has there arisen in *Yisrael* a prophet like Moshe." The *Midrash* is teaching that when Avraham died, there was no teacher like him who attracted others to *Hashem* and cured their spiritual ills until Moshe Rabbeinu. Of the two of them, Avraham and Moshe, King Shlomo said (in the verse with which we began), "A healing tongue is a tree of life." (Me'ah She'arim ch.2)

**"The 'men' had turned from there and went to S'dom, while Avraham was still standing before Hashem. Avraham came forward and said, 'Will You also stamp out the righteous along with the wicked?'" (18:22-23)**

The *Gemara* (*Megillah* 10b) relates that following the Splitting of the Sea, the angels wanted to recite praises to *Hashem*; however, *Hashem* said to them, "My creations are drowning and you wish to recite praises?" [Until here from the *Gemara*] Many ask: In that case, why were *Bnei Yisrael* allowed to sing praises to *Hashem* following the Splitting of the Sea (i.e., *Az Yashir*, which we recite daily in *Shacharit*)?

R' Shimon Schwab z"l (1908-1994; rabbi of Khal Adath Jeshurun / "Breuer's" in Washington Heights, Manhattan) quoted an answer that he heard as a young man: *Midrash Rabbah* teaches that one angel cannot perform two tasks. He cannot do two things at once or experience two things together. In contrast, a human being can feel two emotions at once--for example, he can feel sorry for the drowning Egyptians at the same time that he rejoices over his own redemption.

The angels were not permitted to sing praises when *Bnei Yisrael* were saved because the angels could not simultaneously feel the Creator's "disappointment" over the destruction of some of His creations and His joy at *Bnei Yisrael's* salvation. *Bnei Yisrael*, on the other hand, were capable of feeling those contradictory emotions; therefore, they were permitted to sing, R' Schwab concludes.

(Rav Schwab on Prayer p.238)

R' Moshe Schwerd *shlita* (Queens, N.Y.) notes that the distinction that R' Schwab makes is evident in our verses: The "men"--i.e., the angels--turned from there and went to S'dom--they went single-mindedly to destroy the wicked city. Avraham, in contrast, was able to feel compassion and to stand in prayer for the people of S'dom, despite the fact that he surely despised their wicked ways.

(*Az Yashir: Pesach* p.498)



**"It happened after these things that Elokim tested Avraham . . . 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 which I shall tell you.'" (22:1-2)**

R' Avraham Mordechai Alter *shlita* (Yerushalayim) writes: Avraham, like every person, had traits and behaviors that came naturally to him and traits and behaviors that were motivated by a desire to do the will of G-d. Usually, in Avraham's case, these went hand-in-hand; his natural tendency was to perform *Chessed* / Kindness, and that was also G-d's will. The purpose of the *Akeidah* was to clarify how Avraham would act when *Hashem's* Will ran contrary to Avraham's ideas about how to serve *Hashem*. Therefore, when Avraham passed this test, *Hashem* said (22:12), "Now I know that you are a G-d-fearing man . . ." (*Shiur B'sefer Ha'kadosh Ohr Ha'meir: Lech Lecha* p.7)