

כזור אתייום השבת לקדשו
ששת ימים תעבד ועשית כלמלאכתך,
יום השביעי שבת לה'

SHABBAT LASHEM

THE VOICE OF BNEI AKIVA UK

PARASHAT CHAYEI SARA

25TH CHESHVAN 5783

18TH & 19TH NOVEMBER 2022

VOLUME 33 ISSUE 5



בס"ד



THE LONG WAY HOME SAM STONEFIELD SHEVET HINEINI

As a final gesture of love to his estranged son, Avraham sends his servant on a mission to find a wife for Yitzchak. He commands

his servant specifically: "You will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell. Rather go to my birthplace and my family to select a wife for my son Yitzchak" (Bereishit 24:3-4). Why must Avraham's servant schlep up north to find a shidduch? Why was everyone in Canaan disqualified? Now if you will allow us to dip into the world of the *midrash*, these instructions don't make much sense. According to *midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 39:14)*, Avraham would convert men on their travels, and Sarah converted the women. If this is the case, were there not a plethora of so-called "frum" women for Yitzchak to marry? And was there anything better back in the old country of Charan? Does the *midrash* not famously paint Avraham's family as idolaters? And we know from the text itself that Rivka was raised in a house suffused with idol worship. Why is an idol-worshipping Aramean better than a God-fearing Canaanite?

I must here defer to Rav Hirsch for a rather splendid explanation (comments to *Bereishit 24:4*). Rav Hirsch relates that of course Avraham knew of the Aramean idolatry, but that "only the Canaanite moral degradation could have been the motive." Rav Hirsch writes that it was the *middot*, the ethical characteristics, of the Canaanites that ruled them out as potential spouses. On the other hand, we know that the Arameans, Avraham's kin, had excellent *middot*. In truth, Avraham's legacy begins with his father, "These are the legacies of Terach" (*Bereishit 11:27*). Later, Lavan takes in his nephew and looks after him (more or less). Avraham's family may worship idols, but they also engage in hospitality and kindness (which we see especial-

ly exemplified in Rivka).

So why does *middot* outweigh idolatry? As Rav Hirsch puts it, "Idolatry is an aberration of the mind to be cured. But moral degradation seizes the whole human being into the depths of the soul, where even Avraham could not hope to find a morally pure, innocent wife for his son who would bring moral wisdom into their home." For Rav Hirsch, idolatry is a virulent mental perversion that can be purged but bad *middot* are far more deeply rooted into a person, forming the makeup of their identity.

We see this later on in the Torah, God forgives the sin of the idolatrous golden calf as it is a devastating but understandable sin for a people who just left hundreds of years of Egyptian influence. Later on, however, the sin of the spies condemns a whole generation to life in the desert without the chance for repentance because that sin was a lapse in *middot*. That generation didn't have the attitudes and understandings necessary to conquer the holy land, so that task was left to their children.

As Rav Yisrael Salanter, the leader of the *mussar* movement often recounted, "It is easier to memorize the entirety of the Talmud than it is to improve your character by a minimal amount." It's easy to do or not do certain rituals. Whether it's praying to idols or offering sacrifices in the Temple, these things are easier than actually working on making ourselves better. The prophets time and again reiterate that God doesn't want our sacrifices or our rituals or our 'frumkeit' but rather that we "Do justice and act with loving kindness and walk humbly with God" (*Micha 6:8*).

Sometimes we have to take a moment to ensure that we aren't sleepwalking through our Judaism. That we aren't mindlessly performing rituals but actually utilising them to work towards making ourselves and therefore our society, the best it can be. And that sometimes means schlepping a bit further.

**SAM IS IN SHEVET HINEINI AND WAS A MADRICH ON
BET CHALUTZI MACHANE 5782**

London In 15:52 Out 16:57
Manchester In 15:55 Out 17:05
Cambridge In 15:51 Out 16:59
Brighton In 15:57 Out 17:03

Oxford In 15:58 Out 17:05
Bristol In 16:05 Out 17:11
Birmingham In 15:58 Out 17:06
Nottingham In 15:53 Out 17:02

Leeds In 15:51 Out 17:01
Liverpool In 15:59 Out 17:08
Thaxted In 15:51 Out 16:58
Jerusalem In 16:03 Out 17:17

SHLICHA'S CORNER: IMOTEINU - WOMEN IN TANAKH LEAH IMEINU



After the birth of Yehuda, Leah's fourth son, she says:

וַתֹּאמֶר הַפֶּעַם אוֹדָה אֶת יְיָ
עַל־כֵּן קָרָאתָ שְׁמוֹ יְהוּדָה

"She conceived again and bore a son, and declared,

"This time I will thank [odeh] God,' therefore she named him Yehuda."

Chazal (*Berachot* 7b) amplify Leah's thanks and teach us that Leah was the first person in the Torah to directly thank Hashem:

וַאֲמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן מִשּׁוֹם רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחִי מַיִם
שֶׁבָּרָא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת עוֹלָמוֹ
לֹא הָיָה אָדָם שֶׁהוֹדָה לַהַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ
הוּא, עַד שֶׁבָּאתָה לָאָה וְהוֹדֵתָ,
שֶׁנֶּאֱמָר: "הַפֶּעַם אוֹדָה אֶת ה'."

And Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai: From the day the Holy One, Blessed be He, created the world, no one thanked the Holy One, Blessed be He, until Leah came and thanked Him, as it is stated: "And she became pregnant and gave birth to a son, and she said, 'This time I will give thanks to God,'" and thus he was called Judah.

This *gemara* needs to be understood: surely the *avot* also thanked Hashem and offered *korbanot*, whose purpose is to thank!

The Ketav Sofer writes that the *avot* who offered *korbanot* were giving thanks to Hashem for miracles He did for them that ostensibly broke the laws of nature, such as the birth of Yitzhak. It is natural that they would want to thank Hashem, and it is no wonder that they would feel obliged to do so. Leah, on the other hand, after the birth of her son, which was very much natural, does not see the birth as a trivial and natural issue but rather as some kind of a miracle that Hashem nonetheless intervened to make happen, and for that *Chazal* praised her.

In addition, we find another expression of *Chazal* following the invocation of Yehudah's name by Leah (*Bereishit Rabba*, *parasha* 1a):

לָאָה תַּפְסָה פֶּלֶךְ הַוְדִיָּה, וְעָמְדוּ הַיְמִנָה בְּעַלֵּי הַוְדִיָּה,

הַוְדָה (בְּרֵאשִׁית ל"ח, כו): וַיִּכַר הַוְדָה וַיֹּאמֶר צְדָקָה
מִמֶּנִּי. דָּוִד אָמַר (תְּהִלִּים קל"א): הוֹדוּ לַה' כִּי טוֹב

Leah took hold of the domain of thanking, so her descendants had the ability to thank Hashem, [as we see with] Yehuda: "And Yehuda realised, and said, 'she is correct, - [the child is] from me.'" David said: "Thank God, for He is good."

The Pachad Yitzchak teaches us that Leah instilled two layers of gratitude towards Hashem: The first layer, expressed through Yehudah, when he declared "she is correct, - [the child is] from me" - Yehudah does not thank Hashem, but he acknowledges the fact that it is Hashem that rules everything. The second layer is expressed through

**"LEAH INSTILLED
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David saying "Give thanks to God, for He is good". Here David is not merely acknowledging but in fact thanking.

These two layers are related to each other because one cannot thank Hashem without acknowledging that everything is from Him. It is no coincidence that we learn this from King David, a descendant of Shevet Yehudah.

The Rebbe of Gur said that we are called *Yehudi* after Yehuda, which symbolizes the duty of acknowledgment and gratitude. We could have also been named after the *shevet* of Shimon or the *shevet* of Levi, but we are the *Yehudim*, and our goal is to perpetuate Leah's gratitude to Hashem.

Leah Imeinu bequeathed to us a legacy of thanking Hashem not only for the miracles and wonders he did with us, but thanking him even for the simple, routine things that seem obvious to us.

May we realise this foundation of *Am Yisrael* - to recognize that everything is from Hashem and to abound in thanksgiving.

**RABBANIT AVIYA GOODMAN IS IN SHEVET SHVUT
AND IS THE NEW RABBANIT SHLICHA OF BNEI AKIVA.
TO CONTACT THE RABBANIT, EMAIL RABBANIT@
BAUK.ORG.**

MITZVAH DAY - EXCERPT FROM OUR CHOVERET:

In preparation for Mitzvah Day this Sunday, *madrichim* in *svivot* around the country will be educating their *chanichim* on the idea of mitzvot. Here is an excerpt from our weekly educational booklet, or *choveret*, given to *madrichim* this week:

These pesukim [giving the context to mitzvot, found in Shemot 19:3-6] are describing the loving relationship between God and the Jewish people, the way God brought us close to Him, out of Egypt to serve a higher purpose. Therefore, *mitzvot* must be performed as an act of love between us and Hashem – in no other context is the *mitzva* valid! Every *mitzva* we do must be with an awareness that this act will bring us 'closer' to Hashem and further our relationship with Godliness.

Viewed within this framework, we can see how important *mitzvot* are! They are the access points for connection to Hashem. Let's think about this for a second – remember in Lekh Lekha, Avraham realises that monotheism is correct? You'd expect him to start a religion, right? Well apparently not – he just 'calls out in the name of God' all the time!



That's because he realises where everyone else has been going wrong: they've been serving idols that they had created; meaning their false gods were a product of their own minds and imaginations. In order to serve God, you cannot recreate God in your own image, you must do what God wants and not what you want.

So how do we know what God wants, without it being a projection? Suddenly, the role of prophecy comes to the fore. If we're serving God, the direction must come from the outside in. Moshe the prophet was told by God what the *mitzvot* are, what their fundamental core is, and now we have an access point between us and God.

Discussion point: In a relationship, how important is it to listen to what the other person would like? Does the other person simply want the action accomplished, or do they want emotional investment from you?

TORAH FROM AROUND THE WORLD RADBAZ | NAHALA 21ST CHESHVAN

It's back out of the Old City for us, onto the train at Yitzchak Navon station and back to Ben-Gurion Airport [TLV], where we catch a ~~night boat~~ short flight to Cairo International Airport [CAI]. After a bus to Heliopolis Square and a metro to Bab El Shaariya, we walk to the Maimonides Synagogue.

Rabbi David ben Shelomo ibn Abi Zimra (known as Radbaz) was born in Spain but by aged 13 he was expelled from there along with the other Jews who would not convert. He and his family moved to Tzefat, where he learnt from such illustrious *Hakhamim* as Yosef Saragosi and Levi ibn Habib. At 34, he left Israel and moved to Egypt, where he was appointed head of the *beit din*. After the Ottoman empire conquered the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt, Radbaz was instated as *Hakham Bashi* of Egypt, holding that office in Cairo for 40 years. His students in his yeshiva there included the Ari and Rabbi Betzalel Ashkenazi (author of the *Shitta Mekubetzet*). Radbaz established himself as a prominent figure in the community, giving much of the money he made as a merchant to the poor of the community. Eventually, at the age of 90, he resigned as *Hakham Bashi* and returned to Tzefat, where he served on the *beit din* of Rav Yosef Karo. There are competing traditions as to the date of his death – some maintain that he died just four years after leaving Egypt, others that he lived another 20 years, serving on the *beit din* until the age of 110.



While in Egypt, Radbaz made a series of significant changes. For example, he removed the Seleucid calendar (or *minyán shetarot*) as the dating system for the Jewish community and replaced it with the *Anno Mundi* calendar, based on the creation of the world, in use in most other Jewish communities. He also nullified an institution of the Rambam that had remained in the Egyptian community since the latter half of the 12th century: Radbaz reinstated the individual recitation of the *amidah*. As *Ra'is al-Yahud* ('Head of the Jews'), Rambam observed that nobody was paying attention to the *shaliach tzibbur* during his repeti-

tion of the *amidah*; instead, he writes that everybody was talking and joking around, not responding, essentially making each blessing in the repetition a *berakha levatala*, a blessing made in vain. Rambam was also concerned by the serious *chillul Hashem* that this was causing, as members of other religions saw the Jews degrading their own *tefilla* and not treating it with the proper respect. Therefore, he decreed that there would be no silent *amidah* before the repetition; rather, the *shaliach tzibbur* would begin the *amidah* out loud immediately – those who were able to would recite along with him, and those who were not would listen attentively to fulfil their obligation.

400 years later, Radbaz believed that the circumstances that gave rise to this enactment were no longer present. The huge influx of Torah scholars expelled from Spain and Portugal had, in Radbaz's eyes, raised the calibre of the populace of Egypt, to the extent that they no longer disrespected the *tefilla* of the *shaliach tzibbur* as much as they had in the time of Rambam. He thus restored the initial practice of each person saying the *amidah* to themselves before the public repetition.

Radbaz also came into the public eye recently, during the discussion about the identity of *Beta Israel* (Ethiopian Jews). A responsum of the Radbaz in which he writes that they are without question real Jews from the tribe of Dan, is one of the oldest halakhic treatments of the identity of *Beta Israel*. Based on this responsum and a few others, *Rishon LeZion* Hakham Ovadia Yosef, followed by Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren, ruled that they are Jews, and in 1977 Israel granted them the right of return.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

- **Lishmah**, our women's beit midrash programme, continues this **Tuesday 22nd November!**

- **Vaad**, for male bogrim, will be continuing the discussion of the **shalosh shevuot** with Rav Avichai on **Tuesday 22nd November!**

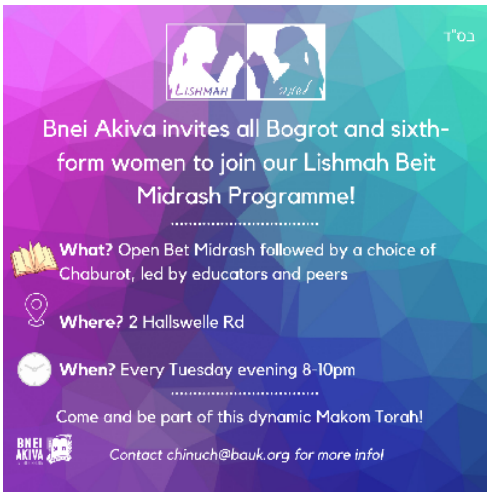
- A **monthly chill** with Rav Avichai and Rabbanit Aviya is starting this **Wednesday 23rd November!** Open to sixth-formers and bogrim, see poster below for more details.

- London **Student Bet Midrash** continues on Thursday 24th November!

- **Winter Machane** applications are still open! To sign up and for more information, visit bauk.org/camps.

- To give any **feedback** to Bnei Akiva, please visit www.bauk.org/feedback

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT ANY OF THESE EVENTS, EMAIL CHINUCH@BAUK.ORG



LISHMAH **2020!**

Bnei Akiva invites all Bogrot and sixth-form women to join our Lishmah Beit Midrash Programme!

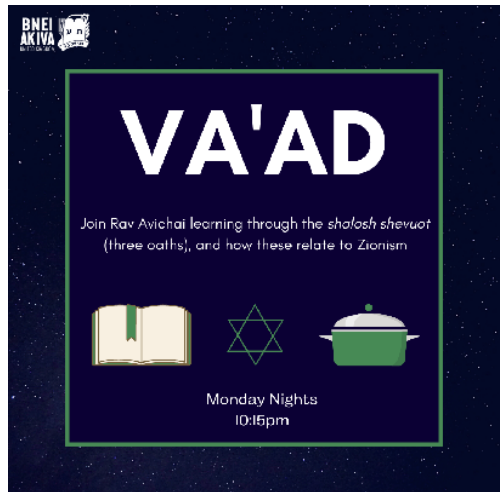
What? Open Bet Midrash followed by a choice of Chaburot, led by educators and peers

Where? 2 Hallswelle Rd

When? Every Tuesday evening 8-10pm

Come and be part of this dynamic Makom Torah!

Contact chinuch@bauk.org for more info!



VA'AD

Join Rav Avichai learning through the *shalosh shevuot* (three oaths), and how these relate to Zionism

Monday Nights
10:15pm



תע בני עקיבא

WINTER MACHANE 5783

22-29 DECEMBER

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Chill With The Goodmans

Sixth formers and Bogrim!

Join us every month at the Goodmans for Torah, food, games and just a general chill.

Starting Wednesday 23 Nov at the Goodmans' House!

Check social media and Whatsapp for updates every month!

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