

זכור את יום השבת לקדשו.
ששת ימים תעבד ועשית כל מלאכתך,
יום השביעי שבת לה'

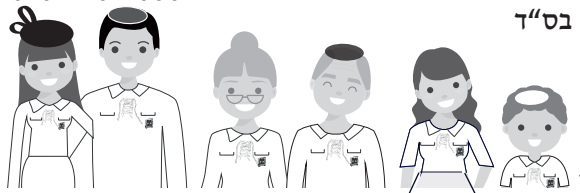
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בס"ד



This week's edition of Shabbat Lashem is dedicated to the refua of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, HaRav Ya'akov Zvi ben Liba. May he have a refua shelema amongst all the other cholim of Israel.



THE POWER OF WAKING UP EARLY

SHOSHANA COHEN
SHEVET AVICHAI

In this week's parsha, we read about Akeidat Yitzchak. G-d appears to Avraham and commands him to offer up his son (Bereishit 22:2). Rashi's comments on this pasuk indicate that, unsurprisingly, Avraham is bewildered and confused. However, he wakes up early the next morning, saddles his donkey, takes his two companions, his son and everything he needs – and goes on his way to fulfil G-d's instructions (Bereishit 22:3). In spite of his confusion, Avraham wakes up early to carry out the will of Hashem, demonstrating an eagerness to do as G-d commanded (Rashi, Bereishit 22:3).

Avraham's waking up early is praised in the Midrash as a symbol of his immense love for Hashem, which was strong enough for him to overcome any anguish he might have felt and do as Hashem told him (Bereishit Rabbah 55:8). The same midrash explains how Avraham's ahavat Hashem, expressed through him saddling his own donkey, provided the merit that saved Bnei Yisrael hundreds of years later from being cursed by Bilaam, who also woke up early and saddled his own donkey (Bamidbar 22:21). The power of Avraham's ahavat Hashem and eagerness to carry out G-d's will is clear.

However, this is not the first time that Avraham wakes up early.

At the beginning of the parsha, two angels come to Sodom (Bereishit 19:1). One has come to destroy the city; the other to save Lot (Rashi, Bereishit 19:1). The pesukim describe the destruction: Hashem rains down fire and brimstone, completely annihilating Sodom and Amorah and wiping out their inhabitants (Bereishit 19:24-25). And then this description is curiously interrupted. The

narrative momentarily leaves Sodom, Lot and his daughters to tell us that "Avraham woke up early" (Bereishit 19:27). What was he doing that was so important for the pesukim to tell us? Avraham was davening (Berachot 26b). He saw the fire, he knew Sodom was being destroyed and he knew that Lot was there. So he davened for his nephew. It was in the merit of this tefillah that "G-d remembered Avraham and saved Lot" (Bereishit 19:29).

These two episodes, placed next to each other, seem to be complete opposites. One is a story of Avraham waking up early to save Lot; the other one is a story of Avraham waking up early to slaughter Yitzchak. However, there is an underlying parallel. In both cases, Avraham woke up early as an expression of his desire to strengthen his relationship with Hashem. In one case, it was through tefillah; in the other, it was through demonstrating ahavat Hashem and carrying out G-d's command. In both cases, Avraham jumped out of bed for the sake of his relationship with Hashem.

Both of these stories teach us paradigms for strengthening our own relationships with G-d. Avraham's davening established the tefillah of Shacharit for future generations, giving us the opportunity to spend time each morning talking to Hashem. Avraham waking up early to saddle his donkey teaches us the importance of doing mitzvot quickly, showing the same enthusiasm as Avraham did, in order to cultivate our ahavat Hashem (Pesachim 4a).

As we move further into the winter, it can feel harder to maintain and strengthen our relationship with Hashem – and to jump out of bed. But Avraham teaches us that, even under difficult circumstances, it is possible for us to sustain that relationship. In both cases, Avraham's efforts were rewarded. If we work on our own relationships with Hashem, our efforts will be rewarded too.

SHOSHANA WAS A MADRICHAN ON HAROEH-GIMMEL 5780 AND IS A LILMOD UL'LAMED PARTICIPANT.

London In: 16:09 Out: 17:16
Manchester In: 16:11 Out: 17:20
Cambridge In: 16:02 Out: 17:13

Oxford In: 16:09 Out: 17:20
Bristol In: 16:16 Out: 17:26
Birmingham In: 16:10 Out: 17:21

Leeds In: 16:04 Out: 17:17
Liverpool In: 16:11 Out: 17:24
Jerusalem In: 16:10 Out: 17:23

BELEIVING IN OURSELVES

RAV JOEL KENIGSBERG | RAV SHALIACH



It's one of the most challenging pieces in all of Chumash. When Hashem tells Avraham of his intention to wipe out the city of Sodom, Avraham's response is remarkable. Far from the faithful observance we encounter later on as he follows the command to

sacrifice his own son, Avraham challenges the sense of justice of the Creator Himself! To the extent that Rashi tells us that when Avraham begins to speak to Hashem – the Torah uses the word “Vayigash” – and he approached – a word whose context in Torah is often that of going to war. Avraham was going to war with Hashem, as it were, in order to try and save the people of Sodom.

But why exactly? What was it about Sodom that Avraham was trying to save? Who was he trying to save?

The obvious answer is that this was a plea against the threat of collective punishment. Surely if some people are wicked the whole city doesn't deserve to be destroyed. Avraham's own Nephew, Lot and his family resided there. Avraham's request could easily be interpreted as a plea for the righteous not to perish along with the wicked.

The passukim seem to echo this point. As the dialogue begins, Avraham turns to Hashem with the challenge - האף תספה צדיק עם-רשע - Would you destroy the righteous along with the wicked?

Two passukim later Avraham repeats this call:

חלה לך מעשת נדבר הזה להמית צדיק עם-רשע והיה כצדיק חלה לך רשע חלה לך השפט כל-הארץ לא יעשה משפט - Would the God of justice act in an unfair way - indiscriminately killing tzaddikim along with resha'im? The point seems clear.

But in between those two is another verse – where the bargaining plea is phrased in a slightly, yet significantly different way. As the discussion begins about how many righteous people might still be in the city – 50, 45, 40, 30... Avraham makes the claim:

אולי יש חמשים צדיקים בתוך העיר האף תספה ולא-תשא למקום למנוח חמשים הצדיקים אשר בקרבה.

The request here is not about the tzaddikim

themselves, but about the entire city.

Maybe by virtue of the fact that not everyone is wicked, the entire city deserves to be saved. As the Divrei David points out on this verse, Avraham didn't need to beg Hashem to save just the righteous. Of course the Judge of Heaven and earth wouldn't do anything unfair. But Avraham's prayer went deeper. He was praying for the welfare of even the most wicked in the city - why?

Perhaps we can best understand by looking back at the story of Noah. Although he himself was saved, Noah was heavily criticized for not praying or trying to save the rest of his generation? What was it that held him back?

The Kedushat HaLevi explains that Noah was “mikatnei emunah” – lacking in faith. But the faith he lacked wasn't in Hashem Above – it was in himself. Noah lacked the faith to believe that he had a unique contribution to make. He lacked the faith to believe that he could change things. And because he felt that he was somebody who couldn't make a difference - he didn't.

Avraham, by contrast, was the greatest man of faith that ever lived. He had faith in Hashem, faith in himself and faith in humanity. The people of Sodom truly were the antithesis of everything Avraham stood for, but he believed that they could change. As wicked as they were now, Avraham felt that they had a Divine spark within them that just needed to be ignited. He wanted them to be saved because he believed that they could all change and that the entire city could enter the category of the righteous.

Every morning as we say Modeh Ani, we conclude with the words – Raba Emunatecha – great is your faithfulness. We begin our day with a declaration of faith - not faith that we have in Hashem, but faith that Hashem has in us. That was the faith which Avraham taught us to act on, no matter how dark things may seem.

FOLLOW RAV JOEL ON FACEBOOK (RAV SHALIACH PAGE) AND ON TWITTER (@JOEL KENIGSBERG)

THE YEAR SPENT ON THE ARK WAS A YEAR OF GIVING. NOACH SPENT HIS TIME THERE ENGAGED SOLELY IN SELFLESSNESS, CHESED, AND GIVING BEYOND HIMSELF. THIS WAS THE PERFECT ANSWER TO A GENERATION DEVOTED ONLY TO TAKING FOR THEMSELVES.

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

DANIELLA WIEDER | SVIVOT AND HADRACHA WORKER



Until Avraham, humans failed in one way or another to fulfil the Will of G-d. Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, each blaming another for their sin. Kayin murdered Hevel, exclaiming the famous line

“Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Bereishit 4:9). The world before the Flood became dominated by violence. Noah – “a righteous man in his generation” (Bereishit 6:9) – was able to save his family but no one else, and later sinned in getting drunk. Even after the Flood, the builders of Bavel were arrogant, thinking that people could build a tower that “reaches heaven” (Bereishit 11:4). Rabbi Sacks suggests that the common theme here is a failure in taking responsibility.

If we understand this, we understand Avraham. He takes responsibility. In last week’s parasha, Parshat Lech Lecha,

Avraham’s shepherds argue with those of his nephew Lot. Avraham doesn’t judge, ask whose fault the argument was or who will gain from the outcome of the situation. He gives Lot the choice. He sees the problem and he acts. Similarly, when Lot is taken captive in a local war, Avraham drops everything to go to battle against the invaders and rescue Lot, as well as the rest of the captives. He refuses to take any of the spoils of victory that he is offered by the grateful king of Sodom. Avraham shows he is his brother’s (or brother’s son’s) keeper. Despite the fact that Lot chose to live where he did with all its risks, Avraham does not say, “His safety is his responsibility, not mine.” He understands the nature of responsibility.

Then, in this week’s parsha, comes the great moment: a human being challenges G-d Himself for the very first time, as G-d is about to destroy Sodom. Avraham protests: “Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do justice?” (Bereishit 18:23–25) This is a remarkable speech. What right does a mere mortal have to challenge G-d Himself? One answer is that G-d Himself signals that he should. He said, “Shall I hide from Avraham what I am about to do?” (Bereishit

18:17), clearly hinting that He wants Abraham to respond.

In fact, Noah received a similar warning: “I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the

earth” (Bereishit 6:13). However, Noah did not protest. To the contrary, we are told three times that Noah “did as G-d commanded him” (Gen. 6:22; 7:5; 7:9). Noah accepted the verdict; Avraham challenged it. Avraham understood what it truly means to take responsibility.

As we have just entered a second lockdown, let’s not forget this important message. It would be so easy for us to shut our doors to the world and focus solely on ourselves – which is important too! But let’s make sure we look out for one another in the ways that we can. Let’s look for opportunities and step up, take responsibility and make a difference.

**NOACH ACCEPTED THE VERDICT;
AVRAHAM CHALLENGED IT.
AVRAHAM UNDERSTOOD WHAT
IT TRULY MEANS TO TAKE
RESPONSIBILITY. AS WE HAVE JUST
ENTERED A SECOND LOCKDOWN,
LET’S NOT FORGET THIS IMPORTANT
MESSAGE.**

WHAT'S GOING ON?

- We are excited to bring you exciting virtual activities over Lockdown. Keep an eye out for details on the Bnei Akiva social media pages.

- **Svivot are continuing over lockdown!** Look out for updates and virtual events from your local sviva or **visit www.bauk.org/svivot**.

- **WE NEED YOUR HELP!** Coronavirus has hit Bnei Akiva hard, costing us over £150,000. Over the last six months our Mazkirut and Bogrim have been working tirelessly to put on a range of fantastic programming for our youth, from Machane Aviv in the Spring, to a celebration of Israel like no other on Yom Ha'atzmaut, and now a packed summer of programming for over 400 children. Please support our **Yad Achim Campaign**. Visit **bauk.org/yad-achim** for more information and to donate.

- Applications are open for **Winter Machane 5781!** Join us at an exciting new site from **21st-28th December** and enjoy a fantastic Bnei Akiva residential full of fun, friends and Ruach! **NEW THIS YEAR: Machane Seenai for Year 11!** Sign up today at **bauk.org/camps** or email **camps@bauk.org** for more information.

- **Winter Machane Tafkidim** have opened! Sign up at **www.bauk.org/camps**.

- **SBM is back!** Look out for updates on social media of the different chaburot being given on a variety of topics and keynote speakers. If you are

looking for a chavruta please get in touch!

- We are launching **Mitzvah Day activities!** Mitzvah Day is the 15th of November and we want you to get involved! Keep an eye out **this week** for an exciting way to get involved from your homes!

- **Mazal Tov** to **Joe Gamse** on his **aliyah** this week!

- Be sure to like our **Facebook page (Bnei Akiva UK)** and follow our **Instagram (bneiakivauk)** to stay informed of our online content!

- To receive weekly copies of **Shabbat Lashem**, sign up for our mailing list at **bauk.org/contact**.

- Visit **bauk.org/feedback** for contact details for all Mazkirut members and to leave any general feedback!

Food for thought:

1. Why was Avraham told of Sodom's destruction? (See Sforno 18:16-21)
2. What can the abduction of Sarah by Avimelech teach us about intentions? (See Rav Hirsch 20:4)
3. Why was Avraham's name repeated twice by the angel in the Akeida story? (See Rashi 22:11)

SHABBAT SHALOM!!!



Winter
Machane
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