

SHABBAT LASHEM

THE VOICE OF
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PERIODICAL IN THE UK



תנועת בני אקובה
BNEI AKIVA UK

NATHAN DANIELS | BOGER DVAR TORAH

Vayera is one of the most action-packed Parshiot in the Torah with Yitzchak's birth, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and Akeidat Yitzchak all featuring in a blockbuster storyline. However, it is perhaps one of the more easily forgotten parts of the sedra that I want to focus on. Towards the end of this week's parsha, between the banishment of Hagar and Ishmael and the attempted sacrifice of Yitzchak, Avraham and Avimelech (king of the Philistines) have a short, but meaningful, interaction.

Avimelech approaches Avraham and offers a peace treaty in recognition of their past friendship. Once their covenant has been made official, the Torah recounts that "Avraham planted an Eshel-tree in Be'er Sheva... and Avraham lived in the land of the Philistines for a long time". The peace treaty is particularly astounding as it comes at a point in time when Avraham's own family seems to be collapsing, and stands in direct juxtaposition to the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah. In order to resolve this confusion, a midrash is brought forward focusing on the tree itself. Two rabbis argue over the exact nature of the Eshel; one says it is an orchard, the other claims it is an inn.

Regardless of which one is correct, it serves to show us that this new bond wasn't just a way to prevent future conflict for Avraham, it was an opportunity to create a relationship of chessed between two peoples.

"And Avraham lived in the land of the Philistines for a long time"

Avraham didn't choose to live in the cities of Canaan where he was first brought by Hashem, instead he takes an active step to enhance this bond of chessed by living amongst the Philistine people. Who knows how many strangers Avraham invited in to his tent in order to share a meal with them? The Rabbi who teaches that an Eshel is an inn has to justify his creative translation. The three letters of the Hebrew word Eshel, he says, each stand for an element of Abraham's hospitality: aleph for "achilah," eating; shin for "shtiya," drinking, and lamed for "Ivaya," accompanying travellers on their way. At a point in which Avraham faces testing moral dilemmas about his family, the planting of the Eshel-tree is a moment of pure service to humanity.

At the start of the Parasha we hear about the three angels who come to bless Sara and inform her about her pregnancy. Perhaps, though, just as much can be learnt from the other visitors who entered Avraham's tent, even if we don't hear explicitly about them. He created an opportunity for himself to bring chessed to the world, and at a time when no one would have blamed him for thinking only about himself and his family, he showed the utmost compassion for the people living around him. This sort of care for others, regardless of whether he knew them, is something we can aspire to emulate as a t'nua today.

PARASHAT VAYERA | ISSUE 04

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Cheshvan 15
5778

Shabbat
Times

London
In: 16:15
Out: 17:17

Manchester
In: 16:13
Out: 17:19

Leeds
In: 16:09
Out: 17:15

Oxford
In: 16:14
Out: 17:21

Cambridge
In: 16:09
Out: 17:15

Bristol
In: 16:21
Out: 17:27

Birmingham
In: 16:15
Out: 17:21

Jerusalem
In: 16:04
Out: 17:36

THE TESTING GROUND



RAV AHARON HERSKOVITZ | RAV SHALIACH

In this week's parsha, we are told of Hashem's testing Avraham by commanding him to bring his son Yitzchak as a korban. The story is introduced as follows (Bereishit 22:1):

ויהי אחר הדברים האלה והאלוקים ניסה את אברהם - "and it was after those things, and God *nisah* Avraham".

The word ניסה, is normally translated as "test", though the midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 55:1) points out that it can also be understood as an attempt to publicise something impressive, and wave it, as if it is a banner or flag. The midrash does so by quoting the verse from Tehillim (60:6): נתת ליראיך נס להתנוסס - "You will give those who fear you a banner to wave".

The events that follow are intended not (only) as a test, but as a way to signify and publicise Avraham's greatness and commitment to Hashem. While commenting on this purpose of the test, the Ramban (22:1) explains:

And God tested Avraham: The point of the test is, in my opinion, that a person has the absolute authority to decide to perform any specific action; (in other words), if they desire they can do an action, and if they desire not to do it, they will not do it. It is called a "nissayon" [test] for the individual being tested [e.g., Avraham], but the blessed Tester will command him to bring out the thing from potential to actuality, so as to give a reward for a good action and not just a reward for a good heart. Know that "Hashem examines the righteous" (Psalms 11:5): when He knows that a righteous person will act according to His will, but still seeks [that person to act with] their righteousness, He will

command him to a test. But He does not test the wicked, since they would anyways not hear. And behold, every test in the Torah is for the good of the one being tested. (Translation based on Sefaria.org).

In other words, the tests mentioned in the Torah are very different from tests we are familiar with from school and other settings. In a school, a teacher will want to ascertain if students have absorbed certain knowledge or skills. The test is intended to examine or discover something. Were there to be a way to do an internal check to know if the knowledge or skills had been absorbed, such a test would be extraneous.

The tests in the Torah are different, not meant to examine or discover anything, for Hashem already knows a person's inner workings: rather the test is intended to actualise potential. To take a person's abilities and skills and make them qualitatively different by bringing them from the world of potential to the world of actuality.

Each one of us has been gifted unique abilities to make Hashem's world a better place. If we do nothing with these abilities, they remain just that: abilities, potential. Hashem gives us not only the underlying abilities, but also opportunities, many opportunities to take those abilities and actualise them, to bring them into being. It is our mission to not waste these abilities, to not just be someone of whom it can be said "He/she has so much potential", but to take advantage of the opportunities we are given to express them and use all "tests" we are given. May we all merit to identify the situations in which we are being tested and take full advantage of them. Shabbat Shalom!

COMMUNITY UPDATES

SVIVOT NEWS

There are 18 Svivot (groups) around the country educating and empowering over 500 chanichim each week. This week we hear from **Golders Green Bnei Akiva**. **Roshim:** Shevi Goodman, Michal Kelly, Rebecca Woolich

Golders Green BA started off with the great success of the Sukkah crawl in late September. The supposedly small youth community of Dunstan Road seems to be growing by the year with more than 30 children turning up to enjoy Shabbat afternoons with friends.

We have a fantastic new tsevet this year and our enthusiastic madrichim never fail to get the children involved and interested. It's been wonderful to receive such support from our community and get to know the future madrichim and roshim of GGBA! We're all really looking forward to the year ahead!

EVENTS TO LOOK OUT FOR

Full details of all our events are available on our Facebook page, or call the Bayit on 020 8209 1319 to speak to one of the team.

Israel Machane Reunions are on the 10th and 11th of November. **To find out more contact joe@bauk.org.**

Shabbat Bogrim is the 24rd and 25th of November. Cost: £15.00. At: Stoke-on-Trent. With a special program for Balfour 100. **For more information contact hannah@bauk.org.**

Campus visits from the Rav Shaliach and Rabbanit Shlichah continued this week with a trip to Oxford! **Contact rav@bauk.org to arrange a visit to your campus.**

Pictured: Bogrim and Mazkirut at the London Yeshiva/Sem fair talking to parents about our Hachshara programs



DVAR HALACHA: WEEKLY QUESTION

Feel free to email rav@bauk.org with any question you want answered!

Question: I boiled chickpeas for Shabbat to make my own hummous, but afterwards realised I'd accidentally done so in a milky pot that we haven't used for a few days and the meal is meat. Do I need to start all over again?

Answer: Pareve food boiled in milky pots is twice removed from the original dairy product, and is referred to as נותן טעם בנותן טעם, or בר נ"ט בר נ"ט for short. According to Ashkenazi practice, one may not cook pareve food in a milky pot in

order to eat it with meat (or vice versa). If however, the food has already been cooked (i.e. we are discussing a בדיעבד situation), and the milky pot has not been used for over 24 hours (אינו בן יומו) before being used for the pareve item, then the food can be eaten together with meat (הגהת הרמ"א). In other words, since the pot under question has not been used for over 24 hours, the hummous can be eaten as part of a meat meal.

בנוסף, יש מחלי' בין החכמת אדם לבין הגר"א מתי מותר לבשל בכלי מהמין השני (לכתחלי' אך אכמ"ל).

WINTER MACHANE 5778

Tafkidim applications for Machane 5778 are now open!

Applications for chanichim are now available!

Dates: 21-28 of December 2017

(precamp for Madrichim starts the 17th)

For more information, applications and brochures please contact Hannah Denby:

02082091319 ext2 | camps@bauk.org