

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
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Avraham's Ten Tests

It states (22:1) וְהָאֱלֹקִים נִסָּה אֶת אַבְרָהָם, "Hashem tested Avraham..." The Mishnah (Avos 5:3) states, עֲשָׂרָה נִסְיוֹנוֹת נִתְּנָסָה אַבְרָהָם אֲבִינוּ עָלָיו הַשְּׁלוֹם וְעָמַד, "Avraham Avinu was tested ten times and he passed all of them." All this was to test Avraham Avinu's emunah (see Pri HaAretz from Rebbe Mendel of Vitebsk, Vayeira, (ד"ה כלל דמלתא, to see if he would think thoughts of emunah. For example, Hashem told Avraham to go to Eretz Canaan, and then everything will be good for him, ואברכך ואגדלה שמך, "I will bless you and aggrandize your name." But when he arrived (Bereishis 12:10) ויהי רעב בארץ, there was a hunger in the land. It was the only land that was struck with famine to see if Avraham would question Hashem and ask, "Why did Hashem send me here, and how is this for my good?"

Even the Akeidah, which required action (to bring Yitzchak on the Akeidah), was just a part of the test. The central part of the test was for Avraham to believe in Hashem and not question Him. Hashem told Avraham that the continuation of his family would come through his son, Yitzchak. Then Hashem told Avraham to bring Yitzchak as a korban. How is that possible? How can Yitzchak be a korban if he was to be the continuation and origin of the Jewish nation?

If Avraham had allowed himself to ask this question, he wouldn't have been able to perform the Akeidah. He removed the contradiction from his mind and followed Hashem's demand blindly, without seeking to understand.

When a person believes in Hashem, and he believes everything is for the good, he can always be happy, even during the most challenging times. Shem MiShmuel (תרע"א) teaches that even at the Akeidah, Avraham was joyous, with a *simchah* shel mitzvah, happy to perform Hashem's mitzvah. Shem MiShmuel proves this from the fact that he had a *nevuah* at this time. Chazal (Shabbos 30b) say, אין הנבואה שורה אלא מתוך שמחה, that *nevuah* only occurs when one is happy. At the Akeidah, Hashem told Avraham (22:12) אַל תִּשְׁלַח יָדְךָ אֶל הַנֶּעֱר וְאַל תַּעַשׂ לוֹ מְאוּמָה כִּי עֲתָה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי יִרָא תֵשֵׁלַח יָדְךָ אֶל הַנֶּעֱר וְאַל תַּעַשׂ לוֹ מְאוּמָה כִּי עֲתָה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי יִרָא, "Do not stretch forth your hand to the lad, nor do the slightest thing to him, for now I know that you are a G-d fearing man..." At the Akeidah, Avraham received the message not to sacrifice Yitzchak. If Avraham wasn't happy at that time, he couldn't have heard the *nevuah*. Avraham's *simcha* was due to his emunah and שמחה של מצוה. We can now say that the existence of Klal Yisrael is because of שמחה של מצוה, joy while performing a mitzvah.¹

1. Reb Zalman Brizel zt'l (renowned tzaddik from Yerushalayim, a Stolin-Karlin chasid) contracted tuberculosis in his youth. There wasn't a cure in that era; the doctors didn't know how to heal him. In addition, no one wanted to get close to him as tuberculosis is highly contagious. He lay in bed, without visitors, fighting for his life. One day, Reb Yisrael Grossman zt'l (a Stolin-Karlin chasid) announced, "How can we allow this? Someone from our kehillah is ill, and no one is taking care of him? We have to check up on him, to see how he is doing?"

Reb Yisrael Grossman went to Reb Zalman's home to visit him. He was careful to maintain a safe distance. Reb Zalman was weak and could hardly speak.

When Reb Zalman saw him, he hinted with his finger that he should come closer to him because he wanted to tell him something. Reb Yisrael debated what to do. "It is a very contagious disease. I risked my life to come here. How can I come closer than I am already? But on the other hand, the patient was requesting that he come closer. Maybe he has a final wish, a *tzavaah* (will), a message to give over?

Seeing how badly Reb Zalman wanted to talk to him, he decided to take the chance. Reb Zalman could

We must know that it wasn't only Avraham Avinu who was given ten tests. Many of our brothers of Bnei Yisrael are tested with "ten difficult tests", of various kinds. They shout out to Hashem, and their shouts go up to heaven. Consider those who are ill, or those drowning in debt. There is the person who cries ceaselessly because he wants to bear a child, and there are the parents who have older children at home, and they cry and pray for their shidduchim. Yet, another painful struggle is צער גידול בנים. They daven for nachas. They want to see their children go on the good path of Torah and mitzvos. R'l, there is sorrow and pain of those whose children were niftar young. This is a test, literally like akeidas Yitzchak.

Each person has his own peckel, but the component that unites everyone is that they all have great distress, and don't know what Hashem wants from them. Go and tell them that Hakaodsh Baruch Hu wants them to accept His hashgachah. The Torah tells us about Avraham Avinu's tests to teach all future generations that just as Avraham was tested for his emunah, so does Hakadosh Baruch Hu test every Yid. Hashem tests us, and He wants us to believe and to pronounce that everything is just, everything is from Hashem, and everything is for the good.

Accepting All Situations with Love

It states (Devarim 6:5) וְאַהֲבָתָה אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ כָּל לְבָבְךָ וְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וְכָל מְאֹדְךָ, "You shall love Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your means."

Chazal explain that וְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ means to love Hashem even if this requires sacrificing one's own life. (For example, for avodah zarah, one

must give his life, rather than transgress. This is to love Hashem with all one's soul.) After this we say, וְכָל מְאֹדְךָ, which Chazal (Brachos 54a) say means כָּל מוֹדָה וְמוֹדָה שֶׁהוּא מוֹדֵד לְךָ הוּא מוֹדָה לוֹ, "Whatever portion Hashem gives you, you shall praise Him." We love Hashem and praise Him, no matter which portion He gives us.

Nesivos Shalom zt'l (Michtavei Kodesh p.149) asks, after the Torah obligates us to love Hashem to the extent that we should be prepared to give our lives for Him, certainly we should love Hashem with כָּל מְאֹדְךָ, which is a lower level, and an easier test. So, after we say וְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ, that we are prepared to give our lives for Hashem, why do we need to say וְכָל מְאֹדְךָ, that we also love Hashem with a lower level of love?

Apparently, to accept and to praise Hashem for each situation of life is an even higher level of love. Sometimes, it is easier to give one's life than to accept life's tests and challenges with emunah, love, and joy.

We will explain:

The Machatzis HaShekel (591:7) asks that in the tefillah, after we say the Akeidah, we request, כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּבַשׁ אֲבִירָהּ אֶת רַחֲמֵי לַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹן, "Just as Avraham Avinu captured his compassion to do Your will, so shall Your compassion capture Your anger from upon us." We focus on the greatness of Avraham, who passed this test. Why don't we also mention Yitzchak's portion in the test? Wasn't this also Yitzchak's test? Yitzchak Avinu was thirty-seven years old at this time; he knew why he was being bound on the mizbeiach, and he wanted to do Hashem's will. It seems that Yitzchak's mesirus nefesh, to die, is greater than

hardly speak. He whispered in Reb Yisrael's ear, נָאֵר מִיֵּט שִׂמְחָה, "Only with simchah!"

He was saying, "I am lying in bed, alone, no one is coming to visit me, and no one can help me. But even so, I am b'simchah! That is my salvation."

(In the end, he survived this illness; he lived to nearly one hundred years old.)

Let us learn from this story the importance of being happy, even during the most challenging times.

Avraham Avinu's test. So, why is Akeidas Yitzchak counted as Avraham's test?

Machatzis HaShekel quotes the sefer Nezer HaKadosh, which raises another question. Nezer HaKadosh asks why the Akeidah is considered the hardest of Avraham Avinu's ten tests? The Midrash (Tanchuma 22) states, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to Avraham, 'I tested you ten times and you passed them all. Now, pass this test [of the Akeidah], so people won't say that the first tests weren't meaningful.'" But why is the Akeidah greater than all the other tests? One of the tests was when Nimrod threw Avraham into a furnace in Ur Kasdim because Avraham refused to bow to idols. (According to some rishonim, this is the first of Avraham's tests.) Avraham willingly went into the fire to sanctify Hashem's name. This test seems greater than the Akeidah.

He answers that it is easier for a person to be thrown into a furnace, which is to

suffer immense pain. But then, after one dies, the pain ends. A parent sacrificing a child is a greater pain, because the distress of the parent will remain with him for days and for years to come, and it will never leave him.

With these ideas, the Machatzis HaShekel explains why the Akeidah is considered Avraham Avinu's test. Yitzchak was prepared to die, which is suffering for a moment, and then it is over. But Avraham was prepared to carry the distress that would remain with him for days and years afterwards. That is a greater *mesirus nefesh*.

This also applies to the great tests of this generation. The tests of our generation aren't a one-time battle, and then it is over. It is a constant struggle. The yetzer hara keeps coming back, and in various ways. Therefore, those who pass these tests are very respected and praised in heaven.²

2. Rav Shach zt'l once said at a shivah, "Not to question Hashem isn't *tzidkus*. It is being clever and wise (חכמה ופקחות)." He gave an example of when the Russians sent many Yidden to Siberia. Those who weren't sent to this frozen prison felt that they were better off, and they pitied their brothers who were forced onto the trains to Siberia. But some years later, the Nazis ym's conquered parts of Russia, and murdered the Jews living there. Those exiled to Siberia survived the Holocaust because they weren't present when the murders occurred. We see from this that no one can know from the onset what is truly good and what is bad. What appeared to be bad became their salvation. A person, with his limited vision, cannot know what is good and what isn't. So, a person with common sense knows better than to question Hashem's ways.

(Reb Shach said this to Reb A.Y. Kook, Rosh Yeshiva of Meor HaTalmud, Rechovot, many years ago, when Reb Kook was sitting shivah for his brother).

I heard a marvelous story that happened with Reb Ovadia Yosef zt'l. Just a week before his chasunah was scheduled to take place, his kallah began talking about a lifestyle that Reb Ovadia hadn't planned on living. She expressed her desire to go with him to theatres and the like.

They didn't end up marrying. Reb Ovadia married another woman, Rabbanit Margalit.

When Reb Ovadia was ninety years old, just a few years before his petirah, a woman arrived at his house, shouting that she must speak with Reb Ovadyah. They brought her in, and she said, "Do you remember me?"

Reb Ovadia didn't. "We were supposed to get married many years ago, and a week before the chasunah, it was called off. You should know that Hashem loves you, because now I am an almanah, and all the years I was married, I never had children. The doctors told me I could never have children."

Reb Ovadyah went through a hard time when the shidduch had to be called off, but it was all for his benefit. Similarly, when something difficult happens to us, let us remember that it is for our good. Something very good will come from it.

The Gemara (Brachos 62a) states, סמא דיסורי, קבולי, the medicine to heal yesurim is to accept them. Accepting the yesurim with the belief that this is Hashem's will and for the good is a segulah and a refuah for the tzaros to leave.

Mishmeres Issamar (from the students of the Chozeh of Lublin and of the Magid of Kozhnitz zt'l) explained the pasuk (Bereishis 6:9) אלה תולדות נח, that when a person has the attribute of נח, that he accepts everything that happens to him with calmness, with emunah in Hashem, Heaven will act with him in a way that all things will become good and tranquil for him. This is the meaning of the pasuk אלה תולדות נח, תולדות, offspring, of acting with calmness and tranquility is נח, that things will be good for him.

It states (6:6) ונח מצא חן בעיני ה', when a person is נח, calm in all situations, and he accepts the past with joy and with temimus, he finds favor in Hashem's eyes, and Hashem will give him solely goodness and brachos.³

Forgiving Protects

It states (18:20) זעקת סדום ועמורה כי רבה וחטאתם כי כבדה מאד, "The shouts of Sodom and Amorah have become great, and their sin has become very grave."

Tiferes Shlomo asks: (1) What is the meaning of זעקת סדום ועמורה, "The shouts of Sodom and Amorah"? The Torah doesn't tell us what type of shouting happened there.

(2) Apparently, their shouting is the same as כבדה מאד, "Their sin has become very grave," so why does it state the same matter twice?

Tiferes Shlomo answers that Sodom and Amorah had two aveiros: they sinned *ben adam l'chaveiro* and *ben adam l'makom*. The pasuk is discussing these two aveiros. זעקת

סדום ועמורה כי רבה, "The shouts of Sodom and Amorah have become very grave." This refers to their sins *ben adam l'chaveiro*. וחטאתם, "Their sin has become very grave", this is for their aveiros *ben adam l'makom*. If it weren't for both aveiros, they wouldn't be punished. Even if they had grave sins *ben adam l'makom*, against Hashem, but if they were at peace and on good terms with their fellow man, Hashem would forgive them. This is because Chazal (Rosh Hashanah 17a) tell us, "Whoever is *maavir al midosov* (he forgives others), all of his aveiros are forgiven." The source is from the pasuk (Michah 7:18) נושא עון, "Who does Hashem forgive? Those who are forgiving others."

So, if the people of Sodom and Amora would only be sinning against Hashem, their sins could be atoned for. However, it wasn't so. זעקת סדום ועמורה, there were great shouts of machlokes and pain in Sodom and Amora. People were cruel to one another. Therefore, וחטאתם כי כבדה מאד, they were punished for their aveiros.

Similarly, Hashem said to Kayin (Bereishis 4:7) הלוא אם תטיב שאת, if you are kind to others, I will forgive your sins. In the merit that you are kind towards your fellow man, Hashem will be kind to you. Kayin replied that this won't apply to him. He said (ibid. 4:13) גדול עוונתי, "My sin is too great to be forgiven. I killed my brother Hevel, so how can I arouse Hashem's compassion on me, to forgive me for this sin?"

It states (Bereishis 2:18) ויאמר ה' אלקים לא טוב היות האדם לבדו, "Hashem said, 'It is not good that man is alone. I shall make him a helper opposite him.'" כנגדו, opposite, can be translated as the other person opposes him (see Rashi). The Tiferes Shlomo explains that it isn't good for man to be alone because when he sins, how will he attain atonement? But when there are other people in the world,

3. He also explains, אלה תולדות נח, that when one accepts everything with calmness, this is מוליד, gives birth, to נח nachas ruach in heaven. As the Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 30:5) says, נח למטה נח למעלה, that with the attribute of נח, he arouses a nachas ruach in heaven.

and he is kind to them, this will help him attain forgiveness for his aveiros that he sins *ben adam l'makom*.

The Tiferes Shlomo explains: "The עזר, help, is that there is someone who is כנגדו, goes against him, and nevertheless, he forgives him. This will result in Hakadosh Baruch Hu forgiving him for his aveiros."

Opposition and living with difficult people are good for us. When we forgive them, when we overlook the trouble they cause us, we merit that Hashem will also forgive us.

If someone harms you in some way, realize that this is from Hashem, and for your benefit. Hashem is helping you attain atonement for all your aveiros.

Chazal (Gitin 36b) say, הנעלבין ואינן עולבים שומעין, חרפתן ואין משיבין עושין מאהבה ושמחין ביסורין עליהן הכתוב "Those who are humiliated and they don't answer back, they hear their mortification and don't respond, they serve Hashem with love and are happy with yesurim, about them it states (Shoftim 5:31) ואוהביו כצאת השמש בגבורתו "Those who love Him are like the sun when he goes forth in his might." Why are they compared to the sun?

The Maharsha explains that about the sun, it states (Tehillim 19:7) ואין נסתר מחמתו, "Nothing is hidden from his heat." This means the sun's kingship rules over the entire world. No one can escape the sun's heat and influence. So, too, those who are shamed and humiliated and don't respond are like the sun. This means that they have rulership. The Maharsha writes, "The Torah gives him kingship and rulership".

A person should know the incredible strength he attains after someone humiliates him. How much he can accomplish at this time, when he has מלכותו וממשלתו, rulership and kingship. He becomes like a king, and his tefillos and his brachos have exceptional strength when he is silent after being humiliated.

Let us return to the Chazal we quoted above: Chazal (Gitin 36b) say, הנעלבין ואינן עולבים, שומעין חרפתן ואין משיבין עושין מאהבה ושמחין ביסורין, "Those who are humiliated and they don't answer back, they hear their mortification and don't respond, they serve Hashem with love and are happy with yesurim..." What does it mean that they are happy with their yesurim? It might mean that whatever yesurim they have (poverty, illness, etc., whatever it is), they are happy with it. If this is the explanation, Chazal is discussing various qualities: It is referring to people who don't answer back when humiliated... and they are happy when they have yesurim. Their reward is ואוהביו כצאת השמש בגבורתו, "Those who love Him are like the sun when he goes forth in his might," as we wrote above.

However, Rashi has another explanation. On the words שמחים ביסורים, "they are happy with their yesurim", Rashi (Shabbos 88b) writes על עליבה הבאה עליהם, that they are happy with the yesurim of the humiliation that they endured. So, according to Rashi, the Gemara is discussing people who are silent when humiliated, and in addition, they are even happy that they endure these yesurim. They are happy because they know that at this time, they will become אוהביו כצאת השמש בגבורתו, like the sun. This means that they will rule like the sun rules, and they will receive the power of tefillah and of giving brachos.

Until now, we followed Maharsha's explanation, why those who are humiliated and remain silent are compared to the sun. It is to tell us that they are given the power to rule, like the sun rules. The Meiri has another explanation for why these people are compared to the sun. Initially, the sun and moon were created the same size, equally large and bright. The moon complained that it isn't proper for two kings to wear the same crown. Essentially, the moon was trying to humiliate the sun and lessen the sun's light. But as a result of this humiliation, the sun didn't lose; the moon lost. Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to the moon, לכי והמעטי את עצמך, "Go make yourself small. If you both can't wear the crown, you shall be

the one to become smaller." The moon became small, and the sun remained with its bright self, with its might and majesty. Chazal compared those who suffer shame and humiliation to the sun so they will know that they shouldn't feel down. They will remain with their greatness. Those who spoke out against them will suffer and become smaller, as this is what occurred to the sun and moon.⁴

It states (Tehillim 69:13-14) *ישיחו בי יִשְׁבִּי שָׁעַר וְנִגְיֵנוֹתָ עָלַי עַתָּה רָצוֹן אֱלֹקִים בְּרַב חֶסֶדְךָ עָנִי שׁוֹתֵי שִׁכָּר, וְאֲנִי תַפְלֵתִי לָךְ ה' עַתָּה רָצוֹן אֱלֹקִים בְּרַב חֶסֶדְךָ עָנִי שׁוֹתֵי שִׁכָּר, בְּאֶמְתָּ יִשְׁעֶךָ* " They talk about me, those who

sit in the gate, and they make melodies about me for those who imbibe strong drink. But, as for me, may my prayer to You, Hashem, be in an acceptable time. Hashem, with Your abundant kindness, answer me with the truth of Your salvation."

The Malbim explains, "When the people at the gate drink alcohol and they make songs of mockery about me, at this time, *וְאֲנִי תַפְלֵתִי לָךְ ה'*, it is an *eis ratzon* for my tefillos to be answered. *בְּאֶמְתָּ*, answer my tefillos and bring me salvations.⁵

4. We have learned that the person who is at the receiving end of the humiliation is the one who gains.

The same is with anger. The person who is at the receiving end of anger gains greatness, as we will explain:

The Gemara (Pesachim 66b) states, *כל שכוועם אפילו פוסקין עליו גדולה מן השמים מורדין אותו*, "Whoever becomes angry, even if it was decreed that he should receive greatness from heaven, he is demoted." The Gemara learns this from Eliyov, the son of Yishai and the brother of Dovid HaMelech. The Gemara proves that he had the potential to be the king of Yisrael but lost the opportunity due to anger. As it states (Shmuel 1, 17:28) *ויהר אף אליאב בדוד*, "Eliyov became angry with Dovid." At that moment, he was demoted, and he wasn't chosen as king.

In (Shmuel 1, 16), Hashem told Shmuel HaNavi to go to the family of Yishai, because *כי ראיתי בקניי לי מלך*, "For I have seen for Myself a king among his sons." When Shmuel saw Eliyov, he said, "He appears worthy of being a king." The Navi states (ibid. 16:6) *ויהי כבואם וירא את אליאב ויאמר אך נגד ה' קשיחו*, "When they came, and [Shmuel] saw Eliyov, he said, "Surely, before Hashem is His anointed."

Hashem replied, *כי מאסתיהו*, "Look not upon his appearance, or the height of his stature, for I have become disgusted with him." The expression *כי מאסתיהו*, "For I have become disgusted with him," sounds like something happened, which caused Eliyov to be rejected from being king. Initially, he was supposed to be the king, but then Hashem rejected him. Shmuel saw the other sons of Yishai and said, *גם בזה לא בחר ה'*, "Neither has Hashem chosen him." *באלה*, "Shmuel said to Yishai, *והיאמר שמואל אל ישי לא בחר ה' באלה*, "Hashem has not chosen these."

Then Dovid was brought before Shmuel, and Shmuel anointed him to be the king.

For most of Dovid's brothers, Shmuel said, "Neither has Hashem chosen him." They were never chosen. They were never destined to be king. However, Eliyov was supposed to be the king, only he lost it *כי מאסתיהו*, "For I have become disgusted from him". Hashem rejected him due to his anger. Chazal learn from this that even when one is destined for greatness, for a high-ranking position, he loses it due to anger.

Sfas Emes (on this Gemara) asks, so why did Dovid get the kingship, which was due to go to Eliyov? We understand why Eliyov lost it. He lost it because of his anger. But why did Dovid receive it? The Sfas Emes replies: It must be that this is the way Hashem leads the world. The person who is at the receiving end of someone's anger will receive the greatness that the other lost.

5. A non-Jewish officer stood at the window of Rebbe Mordechai Chernobyler and witnessed his spirited avodas Hashem. He thought it was funny and laughed at the rebbe, Rebbe Mordechai. Rebbe Mordechai replied, "Behold, it states (Mishlei 3:34) *אם ללצים הוא ילין*, and this can mean that when *resha'im* make *leitzanus* and they laugh at you, *הוא*, Hakadosh Baruch Hu *ילין*, will say words of *מליצה*. He will *ימליץ*, speak in favor and for the benefit of this person who is receiving the shame (Likutei Torah, Tanach).

So, this is another benefit of receiving humiliation. Hashem speaks in his favor.

Some advice on how to hold yourself back from answering when someone humiliates you is to remember that also the humiliation you received from others is destined from Above. In Sefer Yonah, it states (2:11) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' לְדָג וַיִּקַּח אֶת יוֹנָה אֶל הַיַּבְשָׁה, "Hashem said to the fish, and it spewed Yonah onto the dry land." What does it mean that Hashem spoke with the fish? Should we interpret it as that the fish had *nevuah*, and heard Hashem's words?

The Radak explains הָעִיר אֶת רִצּוֹנוֹ שִׁיקָאנוּ אֵל הַיַּבְשָׁה, "Hashem gave the fish the desire to spit up Yonah onto dry land." Hashem didn't speak words with the fish, but sent the fish a desire to vomit and to throw up Yonah, which it did.

The fish threw up Yonah because it wanted to do so, but his desire came from Hashem, Himself. Hashem aroused the fish to have this desire. The same is with everything that occurs in the world. You might think that this person humiliated you, or that person upset you, etc., but everything is destined and from Heaven. Keeping this in mind, together with all the benefits you earn from being silent when humiliated, you will be able to control your words, and you will gain so much from it.

Chinuch

In the *לשם יחוד* before lighting Chanukah lecht (printed in Siddur Yaavatz) it states, וַיְהִי זֶרְעִי וּזְרַע וְרַע, זֶרְעִי תַלְמִידֵי חֲכָמִים וְחֲסִידִים אֲהוּבִים לַמַּעֲלָה וְנַחֲמֻדִים לַמַּטָּה וְתַחֲזֹק אֶת לִבָּבָם לַתּוֹרָה וְעַבֻּדָּה הַכֹּל כְּרִצּוֹן הַטּוֹב, "May my children and grandchildren be talmidei chachamim, chasidim, loved from heaven and appreciated by people below. Strengthen their hearts for Torah and avodas Hashem, everything as your good will."

Someone asked the Yeshuos Moshe of Vizhnitz zt'l for a brachah for good children, and when he asked this request, this yungerman used the words from this tefillah. He said, וְתַחֲזֹק אֶת לִבָּבָם לַתּוֹרָה וְעַבֻּדָּה, that his children's hearts should be strong with Torah and avodas Hashem. The Yeshuos Moshe replied with the final words of this prayer, הַכֹּל כְּרִצּוֹן הַטּוֹב, meaning that it is up to the father to truly want this, and to do actions that will bring this about. If the father desires it with sincerity and if he takes the needed steps to help this happen, it can help the children grow with a strong desire for Torah and avodah. (Obviously, there are other variables, as well, and not everything is up to the parents. But parents should do what they can to help their children in their avodas Hashem.)

It states (Bereishis 1:26) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ וְיִרְדּוּ בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ, "Hashem said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and they shall rule..." "our image,

We can add that generally the malachim are the מַלְאָכִים for Bnei Yisrael, to speak in their favor. As it states וְאִם יֵשׁ עָלָיו מַלְאָךְ מַלְיָן, "If he has a malach to speak in his favor..." However, when a person needs a great salvation, he needs that Hashem, Himself, to speak in his favor. This is arranged from Heaven. He will endure humiliation and shame, and then Hakadosh Baruch Hu will speak in his benefit and be his מַלְיָן.

Someone came to Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil zt'l and poured out his bitter soul before the rebbe. He was upset because someone had caused him a lot of suffering. As this man spoke to the rebbe, he said several curses on the person who was harming him. Rebbe Shlomke told him, "From your curses, I see that you believe in the strength of your words. You believe in their power. So, instead of cursing, why don't you bless yourself with a lot of parnassah, nachas, and anything else you desire? Your words will take effect, and you will leave your tzarah and come out of darkness into the light. Why use your mouth to curse when you can gain so much more?

Similarly, we say that when someone humiliates you, instead of answering back with harsh words of your own, why not accept the humiliation in silence and then bless yourself? If you will do so, you will earn brachos in Olam HaZeh and Olam HaBa.

after our likeness" means that a person was created with the middos that Hashem has. As Chazal say, "Just as Hashem is compassionate, so shall you be compassionate. Just as Hashem is kind, so shall you be kind," etc. The word וַיִּרְדּוּ means to rule (see Rashi). We can explain that there is a lesson in chinuch here. If a parent has good middos, and he will have compassion, patience and kindness with his children, he will be able to rule over them. But if he is angry and impatient with his children, he won't be able to "rule" over his children to be mechanech them.

In (Devarim 11:18-19), after the mitzvah of tefillin, the Torah states the mitzvah of chinuch, of teaching Torah to children. It states, וְקָשַׁרְתֶּם אֹתָם לְאוֹת עַל יְדֵיכֶם וְהָיוּ לְטוֹטְפוֹת בֵּין עֵינֵיכֶם, "Bind them for a sign upon your hand and they shall be for ornaments between your eyes. And you shall teach them to your sons to speak with them..." Rebbe Isamar of Nadvorna zt'l said that this is to teach us to keep our focus on chinuch. Chazal say that it is forbidden to be מִיסַח דַּעַת, to lose focus of the tefillin. When one wears tefillin, he must always be conscious that he is wearing them. The same applies to chinuch. It must always be on our minds.

In states (Bereishis 6:16) צַהֲרָה תִּעָשֶׂה לְתִבְכָּה. According to one explanation in Rashi and in (Sanhedrin 108b), this means that Noach was told to place a precious stone in the teivah, and this stone gave off light, so it was illuminated in the teivah. There is a tremendous lesson in chinuch here. The Yiddishe home, today, is *teivas* Noach. There is a *mabul* outside, and the teivah, the Jewish home, is our protection. But there must be "light" inside. This means there should be happiness and kedushah in the home; it should be pleasant to be there. Especially on Shabbos and on yom tov, the children should feel that it is good to be at home, and that their home is their *gan eden*.

It is known that when there is light inside, you don't see what is going on outside. For

example, when one drives a car at night, it is often important that it be dark in the car so that he can see the road. So, too, the house should be bright and lit up with emunah, joy, and kedushah, because when it is light inside, you won't see outside.

The בן סורר ומורה is a child who consumes large portions of meat and wine. The Torah is concerned that his ways will deteriorate, and he will end up being a thief and a murderer. Therefore, the Torah says, "He should be put to death when he is still innocent, rather than to wait for him to be killed when found guilty." Shem MiShmuel (Ki Seitzei תרע"א) asks that we know there is hope for everyone, and everyone can do teshuvah. Why is the Torah so sure that this boy's ways will deteriorate to the stage of no return? Why is he killed? Perhaps he will do teshuvah and improve his ways!

Shem MiShmuel asks another question: Chazal (Sanhedrin 88b) say, "If the parents of a בן סורר ומורה want to forgive him for his bad ways, they can." This is difficult to understand. The בן סורר ומורה, the rebellious child, isn't killed because he rebelled against his parents; rather, it is because he took on a lifestyle of eating a lot of meat and drinking a lot of wine, and the Torah sees the future of this child, that he will end up standing on the street corners to steal from people. So, why should the parents' forgiveness help to free the בן סורר ומורה from his punishment?

Shem MiShmuel answers that the Midrash (Tanchuma 4) says that only the Jewish nation can do teshuvah. This is because a Jewish soul is a link in a holy chain, going all the way back to the *avos hakedoshim*, and to the *tzaddikim* of past generations. Therefore, even after one sins and tarnishes his neshamah, his connection to his past keeps the spark of his neshamah alive. The Midrash says that goyim can't do teshuvah. This is because they don't have holy roots. Their souls aren't connected to the holiness of the past, and therefore, even if they try to repent, they will fail in the end. Their teshuvah won't last long because they don't have a

holy source to keep their repentance alive. Only the Jewish nation can do teshuvah because the spark of their soul is kept alive and inspired from the generations before them, from the holy link of generations.

The Torah is sure that the *ben sorrer u'moreh* will not do teshuvah because he rebelled against his parents, as it states (Devarim 21:18) *כִּי יִהְיֶה לְאִישׁ בֶּן סוֹרֵר וּמוֹרֵה אִינֶנּוּ שִׁמְעֵ בְּקוֹל* "If a man has a wayward and rebellious son, who does not obey his father or his mother, and they chasten him, and does not listen to them." When a child rebels against his parents and doesn't respect them, he cuts himself away from his roots, and he loses his connection to the tzaddikim of the past. This is the reason we can be certain that the *ben sorrer u'moreh* won't do teshuvah.

However, there is a solution. Shem MiShmuel explains that if the parents forgive their child, the parents' love makes the connection. The son, with his rebellious ways against his parents, detached himself from his origins, but his parents, with their forgiveness and love for their child, can reestablish the connection. Due to his

parents' love, the child is now connected to his parents and to his past. He now has the potential to do teshuvah. Therefore, Chazal tell us that when the parents forgive the *ben sorrer u'moreh*, he won't be killed.

The Baal HaTurim on the pasuk (Bereishis 44:30) *וּנְפִשׁוֹ קְשׁוּרָה בְּנַפְשׁוֹ*, "his soul is attached to his soul," writes, "The word קְשׁוּרָה is written twice in Tanach. Here and the other one is (Mishlei 22:15) *אִוִּלְתַּ קְשׁוּרָה בְּלִבִּי נֶעַר*, "Foolishness is bound in a child's heart."

Based on our discussion, we can explain this as follows: Since the *אוֹל*, foolishness, is tied to the child's heart, the solution is *וּנְפִשׁוֹ*, his father and mother should connect with this child. That will link him to the past and banish the foolishness that's in his heart.

The Baal HaTurim teaches something similar. He writes, *מִפְּנֵי שְׂאוֹלָתוֹ קְשׁוּרָה בּוֹ צְרִיךְ שֶׁתֵּהָא*, "Since he is bound with foolishness, he needs the connection with his father's soul to be *mechanech* him."⁶

6. The Baal HaTanya *zt'l* was in the beis medresh of the Magid of Mezritz *zt'l* and heard three people discussing the *akeidah*. "What is so special about this test? Wouldn't every Yid sacrifice their child if Hashem directly spoke to them and told them to do so?"

One answered that it's true that every Yid would do the same, but that's because Yidden are descendants of Avraham Avinu, and we inherited Avraham's devotion to Hashem. But Avraham was the son of Terach. He didn't have ancestors to draw from. He had to reach this level on his own. That's the reason the *akeidah* is considered a very difficult test for Avraham.

A second person in the group wasn't satisfied with this answer because when one is commanded directly from Hashem to do the *akeidah*, he would undoubtedly do the same, even without having a frame of reference or influence from his parents and ancestors. "In my opinion, the greatness of the *akeidah* is that Avraham performed it immediately, without delay. Hashem told Avraham to perform the *akeidah*, but He didn't specify *when* it should be done. Technically, Avraham could have waited several years before bringing Yitzchak as a *korban*. But due to his burning love for Hashem, he didn't wait — and that's the greatness of his deed."

Yet a third person was not satisfied with that answer either. He claimed that every Yid would also go immediately to do Hashem's will if they received this message directly from Hashem. "In my opinion, the greatness of Avraham is when the *malach* came to stop, he wasn't any happier than when Hashem told him to *והעלהו לעולה*, to sacrifice Yitzhak. This is the part of the *akeidah* that is so magnificent."

The Baal HaTanya noted that each of them spoke in accordance with the level they were on.

The Benefits of Tests

The Maharal writes that the purpose of tests isn't to let Hashem know where we are holding in our devotion and in our avodas Hashem because Hashem knows this information even before we are tested. The purpose of the tests is to help us bring forth our potential.

The potential was there beforehand. Tests bring out the potential into action, and that develops one's personality and spiritual growth.

The Ramban writes that there were other tzaddikim in Avraham Avinu's era who kept the Torah. Still, they didn't reach Avraham Avinu's level because they didn't pass ten *nisyonos* as Avraham did.⁷

There was a person who suffered from many challenges in his life, and he told his rebbe that he didn't want the tests. His rebbe told him, "Take three pots filled with water. Cook a potato in one, a raw egg in the second, and put coffee, sugar, and milk in the third."

An hour later, the rebbe showed him that the raw egg became hard, the hard potato became soft, and the third pot had sweet coffee. The rebbe explained, "The boiling water represents life's tests. The tests toughen the soft people, soften the tough people, and it can make someone sweet like sweetened coffee."

This is because people grow from the hardships that they overcome.

The Gemara (Yoma 69:, based on Nechemya h 9) teaches how the chachamim nullified the *yetzer hara* for *avodah zorah*. The community fasted for three days and for three nights, and the *yetzer hara* came out of the Kodesh HaKedashim (Holy of Holies), appearing like a lion of fire. Zecharyah HaNavi told them, "This is the *yetzer hara* for *avodah zorah*!" and they captured it.

But we wonder, why did the *yetzer hara* come out of the Kodesh HaKedashim? Why was the *yetzer hara* in the holiest place in the world?

The answer is, the *yetzer hara* elevates people to the highest levels – to the Kodesh HaKedashim. The challenges that the *yetzer*

7. Reb Aryeh Levine zt'l would frequent the Yerushalayim prisons to visit the Jewish inmates. Once, someone asked a recently released prisoner whether he plans to steal again. He replied that he won't return to the road of crime. And then he added, "Maybe I will steal once. Reb Aryeh Levine doesn't have a watch, and I want to get him one. If I can't get it for him in legal ways, I will steal. But after that, I won't steal again."

The man went to Reb Aryeh and asked him, "What kind of students do you have? I just spoke with one, and he said he would steal to get you a watch."

Reb Aryeh Levine replied, "I don't tell them mussar, and I don't tell them not to steal. I teach them one thing: They must only speak the truth. And as you saw, this person was very truthful. He admitted that he would steal one more time. If someone is careful never to lie, he won't steal. He knows that if someone asks him whether he stole, he will have to admit the truth, so with being cautious with this one matter, he won't steal, and he won't commit other aveiros, either."

Once, a person was smoking a cigarette on the street on Shabbos, while Reb Aryeh was approaching from the other side. One of Reb Aryeh's ex-prisoner friends ran to hear what Reb Aryeh would tell the smoker. Reb Aryeh said, "I won't tell you to stop smoking, because you know on your own that it is Shabbos, and you smoke, regardless. But I will ask you not to put out the cigarette when you finish smoking it. Let it extinguish on its own. That way, you will have one aveirah less on Shabbos."

A couple of weeks later, this man said (to the person who had listened in on the conversation): "Now, not only don't I smoke on Shabbos, I don't smoke on the weekdays, either."

hara poses enable us to grow higher and higher.⁸

Avraham's first test is לך לך to leave his father's home to go to Eretz Canaan. The tenth test is וילך לך... וילך לך, that Avraham should go to the akeidah. Both tests state לך לך. The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 39:9) states, "It says twice לך לך, and we don't know which is more beloved, the second or the first?"

The Midrash concludes that the second לך לך, of the *akeidah*, was a greater test, and thus, more beloved to Hashem.

But we wonder, isn't it obvious that the tenth test was more difficult? Which test is greater than offering one's own child as a korban?

Perhaps the answer is that after Avraham passed many tests, it was easier for him to pass another one. Therefore, the first test of leaving his father's home could potentially be the hardest test. Nevertheless, the Midrash

concludes that the test of the Akeidah was a harder test.

We learn zerizus from Avraham Avinu. By the akeidah, it states (22:3) וישכם אברהם בבקר, "Avraham awoke early in the morning." Also, when Avraham davened for Sedom, it states (19:27) וישכם אברהם בבוקר. We should do the same. We should get into the mode of serving Hashem early in the morning, and then we will be able to accomplish a lot during the day.

Hashem says (*Shemos* 19:4), ואשא אתכם על כנפי, "I carried you on eagle wings..." An eagle carries her children on her wings. As the eagle flies high in the sky, the children can look down and see the world below. But how do the birds climb up onto the eagle's wings? The young birds have to hop on. The mother eagle doesn't help them. This hints to us that Hashem can raise us to very high levels, but we must take the first step.⁹

8. The following story demonstrates that when one knows he is tested, he will pass the test:

A group of Arabs kidnapped a high-ranking official of the Israeli Intelligence (from the *Shabak*). They tortured him and hardly gave him food and drink, and tried to get him to reveal the secrets of the Israeli agency. But he was loyal to his country and refused to speak. One day, his cell door was slightly open, and his captors stood outside his room, conversing with each other. He saw them holding screwdrivers and hammers, and he understood that they were about to smash his head. He realized that he didn't have a choice; he would tell them everything he knew.

However, he listened carefully to their conversation and heard they were conversing *in Hebrew*! He then understood that they weren't Arabs. They were members of the Israeli Intelligence, and they were testing his loyalty. They entered his cell and warned him that if he didn't speak, they would open his skull, but he didn't say anything. He wasn't afraid. He knew that it was only a test.

Because when one knows that he is being tested, he is empowered. He has the strength to stand up to difficult challenges and remain faithful.

9. The following *din Torah* came before Reb Nissin Karelitz zt'l: In an apartment building in Bnei Brak, there's an elevator, which can carry only four people at a time (as the sign on the elevator clearly states). Four people were already on the elevator, and another two people squeezed in. As the elevator headed up to the next floor, the elevator broke. The question is, who is responsible for paying for the repairs? Some said the two people who entered last should pay because they overloaded the elevator. Others claimed that all six were responsible, because when they saw two people insisting on coming in, they should have left the elevator. (See *Bava Kama* 10:, regarding ten people sitting on a bench and the bench broke, which discusses a similar scenario.) Reb Nissin Karelitz wisely ruled that it isn't the two and it isn't the six. The one who pressed the elevator button to send the elevator to the next floor must pay, because he caused the elevator to overwork and collapse.

Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Succos passed, and baruch Hashem, we are 'loaded' with holiness. But

Hachnasas Orchim

The beginning of the *parashah* elaborates on Avraham's *hachnasas orchim*.

The holy *sefarim* say that when a tzaddik excels in a mitzvah in his lifetime, he continues to perform this mitzvah after his *petirah*. For example, Avraham Avinu excelled in his *hachnasas orchim*, and until today, when a Yid performs *hachnasas orchim*, Avraham comes to help him perform the mitzvah.

The story of Avraham Avinu's *hachnasas orchim* and the three *malachim* is written in the past tense: "He took... He went... He hurried... etc. The exception is the words (18:8), והוא עומד עליהם תחת העץ ויאכלו, "[Avraham] stands above them..." These words are written in the present tense. This implies that until today, when Yidden do *hachnasas orchim*, Avraham stands there. He is present, for he wants to take part in the mitzvah.

Reb Chaim Brisker *zt'l* was extremely ill as a child, and all the doctors lost hope. Rebbe Moshe Kobriner was visiting Brisk at the time, and he stayed in the home of Reb Chaim's grandfather. The grandfather said to the Rebbe, "What's going to be with my Chaimke?"

Rebbe Moshe Kobriner told him the *vort*, that אברהם עומד indicates that Avraham is present at every *hachnasas orchim*. He added, "Chazal (*Bava Basra* 16:) say, 'A precious stone hung from Avraham Avinu's neck. Whoever saw the stone was healed.' Since you are hosting me and performing *hachnasas orchim*, this means Avraham Avinu is here, in this home. Avraham wears the gem that brings *refuah*. Your Chaimke will surely have a *refuah sheleimah*." And indeed, he did.

Once, Rebbe Moshe Kobriner was a guest in the home of Rebbe Aharon Karliner *zt'l*.

Reb Aharon told him that his daughter was ill. Rebbe Moshe Kobriner said to the ill girl, "Your father is performing *hachnasas orchim*. This means the stone of healing is hanging on his neck. Look at your father and you will be healed."

Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zt'l* was once talking with his chassidim about a certain Yemenite tzaddik who fed hundreds of refugees who lost their homes in World War I.

One of the chassidim said, "I heard that this tzaddik was a *chavrusah* with one of the kabbalah giants..." He was implying that, in addition to his *chesed*, this tzaddik was a scholar in the hidden parts of the Torah.

The Rebbe replied, "Why are you mentioning that? Right now, we're discussing that he fed hundreds of homeless Yidden..." as if to say, the merit of feeding Yidden is so great, it isn't necessary to add anything else.

The Baal HaTanya *zt'l* told the Magid of Mezritz *zt'l*, "It's already twenty-four years after my *chasunah* and I still don't have children." The Magid told him to perform *hachnasas orchim*, and he will merit children. As it states (*Tehillim* 119:9), במה יזכה נער, "How does one merit children? את אורחו, by hosting guests."

The Magid added, "The father of the Baal Shem Tov also merited his child in the merit of *hachnasas orchim*."

This is as it states *הא לכם זרע* (*Bereishis* 47:23), and *ה"א* is *roshei teivos* for הכנסת אורחים. With *hachnasas orchim*, one can merit זרע, bearing children.

In this week's *parashah*, Avraham Avinu was ninety-nine and Sarah Imeinu was eighty-nine, and they were both barren. In the merit of *hachnasas orchim*, they bore a child the following year.

that isn't sufficient. We have to "press the button", to get to the next level. We have to continue growing. We shouldn't be complacent about our current level and current achievements.