



הרב הראשי עיה"ק אלעד **מרדכי מלכא שליט"א**
נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,
ישיבה קטנה ארחות יהודה, ביהמ"ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים "לקח טוב" קופת "מפעל החסד" אלעד
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Parashat Vayera

"The Greater the Effort, the Greater the Reward"

Our *parasha* states (18:1-9), "Hashem appeared to him in the plains of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day. He lifted his eyes and saw: And behold, three men were standing over him. He perceived [them], so he ran toward them from the entrance of the tent and bowed toward the ground. And he said, 'My lord - If I find favor in your eyes, please do not pass by your servant. Let some water be brought and wash your feet, and recline beneath the tree. I will fetch a morsel of bread so that you may sustain yourselves [and] then go on- inasmuch as you have passed your servant's way ... So Avraham hastened to the tent to Sarah and said, 'Hurry! Thee *se-ah* of meal, fine flour; knead and make cakes!' Then Avraham ran to the cattle ...

Later in the *parasha*, following *Akeidat Yitzchak*, it states (22:12-17), "And he [the *malach*] said, 'Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, nor do anything to him; for now [I] know that you are a G-d-fearing man, since you have not withheld your son, your only one, from Me.' And Avraham raised his eyes and saw-behold, a ram caught in the thicket by its horns; so Avraham went and took the ram and offered it up as an offering instead of his son ... The *malach* of Hashem called to Avraham a second time from Heaven and said, 'By myself I swear-the word of Hashem - that because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only one, I shall surely bless you and greatly increase your offspring like the stars of the Heavens and like the sand on the seashore...'"

The Words of our Sages

Our Sages [*Baba Metzia* 96b] teach that Avraham was rewarded measure for measure for the kindness that he did with the *malachim*. Not only was he rewarded for doing this kindness, but he received a reward for every component and detail of this *chessed*. The reward was marked with great precision - whatever Avraham did himself, Hashem, as it were, would do the same for his descendants; anything that Avraham did for the *malachim* through an intermediary, Hashem would do for the Jewish People with an intermediary. In *Bereishit Rabbah* (18:10), our Sages share with us one example: "Just as Avraham told his guests to take a sip of water, Hashem would give his children water in the desert, in the settled areas, and in the future."

Questions

- 1 - Why did Avraham receive reward for every different part of the act of kindness, when he only did one act of tending to his guests?
- 2 - Avraham was constantly taking in guests. Why did he receive so much reward for this particular *chessed* with the *malachim*, especially after they didn't really need anything and only pretended to eat the food that he gave them?



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3- We still benefit from the *Akeidah* until today and on *Rosh Hashanah*, we blow a *shofar* to "remind" Hashem of the merit of the *Akeidah* and awaken His mercy. The commentators ask why we use a *shofar*, which is only a remembrance of the ram that was bound in Yitzchak's place? Wouldn't it be more appropriate to make a remembrance for Yitzchak and not the ram, as the real test and merit for Avraham was sacrificing Yitzchak, not the ram?

4- The Torah says that Hashem would bless Avraham because "you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son." It seems that "this thing" is referring to Avraham's sacrificing the ram. How could the Torah say that the first reason that Avraham was blessed was for bringing the ram and only the second reason was for not withholding Yitzchak? Wasn't sacrificing Yitzchak the main test?

The Easy Life

When we reflect on our society, we see that most people love and seek an easy life – especially when it comes to mitzvot – and prefer whenever possible to find shortcuts and not have to exert any toil or effort. In *tefila* they are happy to shorten their prayers as much as possible and are thrilled when there's any reason to avoid saying *tachanun*. They prefer that their *tefillin* be brought to them ready for use without having to check and investigate all the various details involved. The same goes for the *daled minim* - they want a pre-packaged and pre-checked set without having to worry or bother with finding and checking everything themselves. On *Pesach*, they prefer to sell their homes instead of rolling up their sleeves and checking every crack and corner for *chametz*. Yet, when it comes to their livelihood and business, they believe that their success is dependent on the amount of time and effort they put in. They will give no rest to their bodies and throw all their energy into making sure they succeed. However, our holy Torah has the exact opposite approach and teaches us that the greatness of a person's mitzvot is determined precisely according to the amount of pain and effort involved. The true shortcut for the soul is doing things that are difficult, for in that manner the soul will reach perfection faster. Regarding our livelihood, the reverse holds true: Success does not correspond to our efforts, but is dependent on whatever is decreed from Above. Hashem can impoverish the rich and grant riches to the impoverished; wealth and honor are completely in His Hands. The *Tanna* tells us that they [the non-Jews] toil and we toil. They toil in business and we toil in Torah and mitzvot. We get rewarded for our efforts while they get no reward for their efforts. In this world, payment is based exclusively on the product, while in Torah and mitzvot one is paid according to the effort.

Mitzvot Without Pain

In *Avot D'Rav Natan* (3) it says, "If you have learned Torah in comfort, don't abandon it during difficult times, for it is better for a person to do one thing [despite] difficulties, than one hundred with ease." Later (27) it teaches, "Ben Bag Bag said: The greater the effort, the greater the reward. Once a donkey driver came to Hillel *HaZakein* and told him, 'Rebbe, I'm better off than you are - you have to suffer and go on the long road from Babel to *Eretz Yisrael*, while I walk out the door and find myself in *Yerushalayim*. Hillel was quiet for a moment and then he asked the man, 'How much would you charge to take me to *Amoom*?' 'One dinar,' the man replied. 'What about to *Lud*?' 'Two dinar.' 'To *Keseren*?' 'Three,' the man answered. Hillel said, 'I see that the longer the road, the greater the wages.' 'Yes,' replied the donkey driver, 'according to the [length of the] road are the wages.' 'Would



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that it be,' said Hillel, 'that my feet would be compensated like the feet of the donkeys so that Hillel would fulfill, 'The greater the effort, the greater the reward.'

The Greatness of Avraham's Chessed with the Malachim

According to these words of our Sages, we can readily understand why the act of kindness Avraham performed for the *Malachim* was given special treatment. He performed this *chessed* on the third day after his *brit milah*, the day when the pain is the greatest. The pain was such that Hashem did not want Avraham to have to trouble himself with guests and made sure that day would be extraordinarily hot to prevent anyone from venturing outdoors. But Avraham, rather than being happy of being relieved of the obligation to tend to guests, was pained and distressed. He even went outside and sat in front of his tent in midday, undeterred by the blazing heat, hoping that maybe he would find a weary traveler or two to take in to his home. To alleviate his distress, Hashem sent the *malachim* to be his guests. Although Avraham, due to his weak state, was exempt from the obligation to tend to guests, he nevertheless did this *chessed* despite the great pain and difficulty involved. This is what made this act of kindness so special and deserving of a unique reward, far above all the other acts of kindness that Avraham performed throughout his life. Since the main reward was for Avraham's effort and sacrifice, anything that he did himself and thereby exerted more effort, was rewarded by Hashem by performing this same kindness Himself for Avraham's descendants in the future.

The Answer of the Kol Yehudah Regarding the Remembrance of the Akeidah

Along the same lines, the *Rosh Yeshiva of Porat Yosef*, HaRav Yehuda Tzedaka, in his *sefer Kol Yehuda*, explains the test of the *Akeidah*. It is true that the main test for Avraham was the binding of Yitzchak. Yet, from the actual performance of the *Akeidah* it is unclear whether Avraham bound Yitzchak with a willing heart or if he was forced to act against his will, being unable to go against an explicit command from Hashem. The test to see if Avraham bound Yitzchak with a full heart or not began after Avraham had already bound Yitzchak and Hashem told him that he did not have to sacrifice Yitzchak. When Avraham immediately began to look for something to bring in place of Yitzchak and sacrificed the ram, he proved that he willingly bound Yitzchak. If this were not so, the minute that Hashem told him he was exempt from sacrificing Yitzchak, he would have picked up and left for home.

Words of Mussar

We have learned that not all mitzvot and good deeds are considered equal. It is entirely possible that a person will do a thousand mitzvot and will not receive as much reward for them as for a single mitzvah he does with great effort and self-sacrifice. The rule is that the greater the effort, the greater the reward, and this rule is true for all mitzvot and good deeds. Only Hashem is capable of making this evaluation and taking into consideration all the difficulty and self-sacrifice that is behind a specific mitzvah. This is why many times a single deed will cause a person to achieve greatness, as we find with Avraham. Although he did countless acts of kindness throughout his life, the Torah felt it most appropriate to mention specifically his *chessed* with the *malachim*. Despite the *malachim* not even needing this *chessed*, it was still Avraham's greatest act of kindness, as it was done with unequalled self-sacrifice. The pain, effort and self-sacrifice of Avraham earned him and his descendants



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an incredible reward. This is in direct contrast to the general trend to seek shortcuts and comfort in mitzvot and good deeds. A person should realize that when Hashem presents us with a difficult and strenuous mitzvah, He is giving us a shortcut to greatness, and we can merit a reward for us and our children, from now until the end of time.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rav Mordechai Malka