

A Taste of Torah Anyone Home?

By Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

I believe that a lot of us have an image of Avraham Avinu as this nice old man, the kind who gives out lollipops in shul and encourages you to make a blessing, just on a much larger scale. After all, that's what he did, right? Don't you have a vision of a long, white-bearded Jew sitting by his tent, on the lookout for wayfarers who missed the last rest area? He invites them in, feeds them a feast fit for a king, and then informs them that they ought to thank the One, Almighty G-d for their sumptuous meal.

The above description is rather inaccurate. Not that Avraham didn't do all that; but describing Avraham Avinu as a generous host who did outreach is like saying that Beethoven could read sheet music.

Avraham Avinu's greatest mission in life was to reveal Hashem's presence in the world. The Rambam (Laws of Idolatry 1:3) states that Avraham came to the conclusion that there is one incorporeal G-d through his own philosophical journey; he then proceeded to debate the other wise men of his time, eventually defeating them all, nearly losing his life in the process were it not for G-d's miraculous intervention.

There is a Medrash that discusses the formation of Avraham's lifelong philosophy. The Medrash tells of a person travelling from place to place, when he suddenly saw a mansion that was on fire. The fellow asked, "Is it possible there is no one

directing this mansion?!" The owner then revealed himself and cried, "I am the owner of this mansion!" Similarly, Avraham exclaimed, "Is it possible for the world to be without a director?!" Hashem then revealed Himself and said, "I am the Owner of this world!"

The Medrash is quite odd, for it doesn't quite stick to the storyline. The Medrash ought to have told us that the traveler entered the mansion and found the table piled high with his favorite food, the bed perfectly made, clothes that fit him to a tee prepared in the closet. This would seem to be a more apt description of a world that provides for our needs. But a mansion burning?!

Even more puzzling, the Medrash seems to imply that Avraham couldn't quite perceive Hashem's presence in the world, and Hashem had to reveal Himself to resolve Avraham's confusion.

Rabbi Chaim Friedlander explains that this Medrash is describing much more than Avraham's realization that there must be a Creator. The Medrash is telling that Avraham saw a world that spoke of one G-d, yet *was being destroyed!* Because mankind was doing a miserable job of living as Hashem wanted, Avraham realized that he needed to clean up the mess, get things back on track, and move the world in the right direction. Instead of turning his back and saying, "Nu, nu, so everything is going down the tubes, who cares?!",

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Stories For The Soul

A Cut Above

The Bluzhever Rebbe, Rabbi Yisroel Spira (1889-1989) was a survivor of the Holocaust who had suffered in the camps throughout the war. During one particular brutal assignment of chopping wood, he overheard the Nazis instructing all infants, children and mothers to line up. The Rebbe understood very well that this meant that they were next to be killed. Amidst the cries and moans of the mothers, the Rebbe heard a mother cry out, "A knife, a knife! I need a knife."

The Rebbe, thinking that it was a distraught woman who wanted to take her life, quickly ran over and tried calming her down. An S.S. officer who witnessed the scene came over and demanded to know what they were discussing. The woman repeated her request for a knife. Realizing the woman's intent, the officer proudly presented the woman with a knife. The woman ran to a bundle of rags sitting on a log; she unwrapped the rags to reveal an infant. She recited a blessing and circumcised him before the stunned Nazi.

Turning toward Heaven, she exclaimed, "Master of the Universe! Eight days ago You gave me a child. I know that neither I nor he will long survive in this accursed place. But now, when You take him back, you will receive him as a complete Jew."

Bris milah, given to Avraham in this week's parsha, is the ultimate symbol of Hashem having chosen us as His nation. And we remain His nation, and continue to perform *bris milah*, even in the most dire circumstances.

Kollel Happenings

JUSTICE AND THE MEDIA AT NEXT TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Steven Zansberg, Partner, Levine, Sullivan, Koch and Schulz LLP, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they explore the role of media in the justice system. November 5th, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA WITH RABBI SHACHNE SOMMERS

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion, and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issue, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. Sunday nights, 7:40-8:30 pm, at the Kollel for men, 1516 Xavier, and Tuesday nights at the Southeast Kollel Torah center, 8-9 pm, for men and women.

LEARN 2 LEARN

You have long dreamed of acquiring the tools to achieve proficiency in learning Gemara on your own. But how? The Denver Community Kollel offers a comprehensive, step-by-step, level-by-level program crafted for people just like you. All you need is the ability to read Hebrew; we will teach you the rest. For more information, contact rmh@denverkollel.org.

Interpersonal Issues

The Laws of Lashon Hara (Slander)

Another situation which requires competent Rabbinic guidance is where two people are considering going into business together. Let us suppose that you are aware that one of these people, whom we shall call Reuven, is not a man of means. On

the one hand, his lack of capital could be a liability in the business. But may one inform his would-be partner, Shimon? Just because he is not a man of means does not mean he is unable to succeed in business; thus, it may not be proper to inform Shimon.

Ask the Rabbi Filtered Content

Ira Rosen from Rutgers asked:

Dear Rabbi,

May one use a tap on Shabbat that has a water filter attached to it, given that it separates certain items from the water? The filter is permanently attached. Does it make a difference if the filter must be turned on?

Thank you for your time.

Dear Ira,

It is permitted to use the filters you have described on Shabbas as long as the water is potable even without the

use of the filter ~ and the filter is there "just to be extra safe." I assume that is the case where you live. In terms of "turning it on," as long as you did not need to throw an electrical switch, it would be permitted to "redirect" the water to the filter from the spigot.

Source:

Rabbi Yehoshua Neuwirth - *Shemirath Shabbath* 3:56.

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A Taste of Torah

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Avraham realized that as he travelled to the Next World, this "mansion" he encountered must have a purpose - and it was up to him to make sure that purpose was realized!

Once Avraham made the effort to spread the name of Hashem, and after spending decades teaching to the world, "Can this mansion not have a Director?!", Hashem revealed Himself to Avraham.

I wasn't around in Avraham's days, but these days, the world sure seems

to be burning under our feet. Some people shrug their shoulders and say, "What can we do?" But we, as the descendants of Avraham, must exert ourselves to our fullest to sanctify G-d's Name to the rest of the world. And when we, the Jewish People, invest all our potential, all our efforts, all our strength and resources toward that end, G-d will reveal Himself to all the world and declare, "I am the Master of this mansion!"

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