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VAYEIRAH – SAY LITTLE AND DO MUCH

A politician visited a village and asked what their needs were. “We have two basic needs, sir,” replied the villager. “Firstly, we have a hospital, but there’s no doctor.” Upon hearing this, the politician whipped out his cellphone, and after speaking for a while he reassured the village leader that the doctor would be there the next day. He then asked about the second problem. “Well,” the villager said, “there is also no cellphone coverage anywhere in this village.”

Some people are not to be believed no matter what they say because “their word” means nothing (usually a result of going back on their agreements or “guaranteeing” too much). Then, there are people who “under-promise and over-deliver”. Such people are viewed as righteous by the Torah, as we see from the example of our first forefather, Avraham Avinu.

This week’s Parsha relates the story of when Avraham, recovering from his bris at 99 years young, suddenly noticed three travelers passing by and ran to invite them into his home. These passersby, who were angels in human disguise, accepted the invitation, and Avraham and Sarah prepared a sumptuous feast for them. Interestingly, we find that Avraham never promised them a delectable five-course meal. All he said was (Bereishis 18:5): “And I will take a morsel of bread and sustain your hearts.” However, when push came to shove, Avraham ran to the herd and fetched a tender calf (ibid. 18:8). The Sages (Bava Metzia 87a) derive from here that the righteous say little and do much. The wicked, however, say much and even a little they do not do, as we shall see from Efron’s false assurances to Avraham in next week’s Parsha.

Rabbi Yeruchem Levovitz, ZT”L, (in the Da’as Torah: Bereishis, p.117) commented on this that the whole idea of talking about what you plan to do is negative. When you think of doing some good deed, what does your talking in advance add? If you plan on doing some good deed, just go and do it. Talking about the good that you are thinking of doing is superfluous and frequently very counterproductive. It is so much easier and pleasurable to talk about the good that you would like to do rather than making the effort to act. However, upon examination, we discover that it is a cheap way of getting honor and approval.

Rabbi Zelig Pliskin observes that the problem with talking so much is that at the end of the day, one might not actually get to do the action (as the Yeitzer Hara will try to prevent a person from making him look silly). Even if one does the action, needlessly talking about them is likely to change one’s focus from doing good for its own sake to doing good for the sake of approval. We know that a righteous person keeps his word. Therefore, he is careful about making rash promises that he might later have difficulty fulfilling. The wicked are careless with what they say. Even if they say they will do something, they don’t mind breaking their word, so it’s likely that they won’t do it. At the end of the day, we should not just talk about the good you plan to do.

Rabbi Pliskin (in “Growth Through Torah”) cites an example of a role model in “doing a lot and talking little”, **Rabbi Nochum Perchovitz**, ZT”L, the Rosh Yeshiva of Mir. Rav Perchovitz often performed chesed for his students without fanfare or publicity. One of his students, who was greatly helped, only found out after many years that it was Rav Nochum who helped him. This student had difficulty buying an apartment, and he spoke to Rav Nochum about his problem several times. He did not expect any practical help but wanted emotional support; Rav Nochum spoke to him at length and each time said, “Hashem will help.” A short time later the problem was solved, and he received the necessary loans to purchase the apartment. Many years later he found out that behind the scenes Rav Nochum acted on his behalf in some unusual ways. He even had his father-in-law **Rav Chaim Shmuelewitz** write a letter to the proper person. Even though Rav Nochum did so much for him, he never mentioned a single thing.

Let’s remember that when we focus on doing more and talking less, we earn the respect and trust of people far more than if we take the easy road of promising them the world but falling short and generating disappointment from failed expectations.

“Oh goodness, have I been talking too much again?”



HALACHA HIGHLIGHTS BY RABBI DANIEL LEVY KIDDUSH LEVANA – SANCTIFYING THE MOON

Scenario: Shmuel was excited to recite Kiddush Levana. He walked out into the street with the members of his shul but then realized, right before making a beracha, that he was standing under a tree. Ideally, one should not be under a roof when reciting Kiddush Levana, but would being under a tree be a similar issue?

Discussion: The **Yalkut Yosef** (Rav Yitzchak Yosef) rules explicitly that this is permitted. The primary reason one should not be indoors or under a roof is “to go out to greet the Schechina.” Being under a tree one has fulfilled the directive to go out and greet the King. The **Maharil**, however, has a different concern. We know that someone under a roof is susceptible to being mekabel tumah (become spiritually impure) because something is tamei in the “tent”. **Rav Moshe Feinstein**, ZT”L (in Igros Moshe) writes that we are not concerned with the Maharil’s reason unless there is a high likelihood that something tamei is on the tree in question that may cause the individual to contract the tumah.

Question: Why is it customary to recite “Dovid Melech Yisrael Chai V’kayom - David, King of Israel, lives and endures” three times during Kiddush Levana?

Answer: The **Rema** (Orach Chaim 426:2) explains that Dovid Hamelech’s kingdom is compared to the moon. Just as there is a cycle moon is renewed every month, in the future, Dovid Hamelech’s kingdom will be renewed. The Jewish nation will return to cling to Hashem, just like the moon is renewed with the sun, as the Pasuk (Tehillim 84:12) says, “For a sun and a shield is Hashem, G-d.” Therefore, it is customary for us to be happy and even dance at the Kiddush Levana like at a wedding.

Many have the custom to recite the phrase found in the *Tanna Devei Eliyahu*: “It was taught in the academy of Rabbi Yishmael: Even if the Jewish people merited no other privilege than to greet their Father in heaven once a month [through Kiddush Levana], it would be sufficient for them.”





Scenario: The Rema mentions the custom that Ashkenazim and many Sephardim communities to say "Shalom Aleichem" three times during Kiddush Levana. Dovid was curious why this was necessary, so he came over to Rabbi Goldberg to find out the reason.

There are a few reasons for this. The Match Moshe says that when we say the beracha on the moon, we recite the Pasuk, "*tipol aleihem aimasa vafachad* - let fear and terror fall on our enemies," we immediately greet our neighbors with "Shalom Aleichem," to demonstrate that we wish peace for our fellow Jews. We are emphasizing that only our enemies should be afraid.

The second reason (Chullin 60b) is as follows. Hashem originally created the sun and the moon as two equal, great luminaries (see Bereishis 1:16). The moon objected to God, asking, "Master of the Universe, is it possible for two kings to share one crown?" In other words, the moon and the sun can't be ruling the skies simultaneously. At that time, there was a kitrug (prosecution) in Shomayim, and Hashem told the moon, "If so, go and diminish yourself". Some explain that the moon would be "demoted" to illuminate only at night. Others say that the moon would lose its own light and only be a reflection of the sun's light. Therefore, during Kiddush Levana, we recite Shalom Aleichem to try to counteract the kitrug and wish peace upon all others.

The Torah Sweets welcomes Rabbi Daniel Levy to the team. Rabbi Levy will write a weekly column on Halacha. He has been delivering inspiring lectures for over twenty years. His enthusiasm and ability to connect with a wide variety of audiences has made him popular with teens, laymen, and scholars. He is a graduate of Yeshiva Beth Medrash Govoha in Lakewood. Rabbi Levy's shiurim (classes) can be found on Torahanytime.com.

This article is dedicated Leiyulei Nishmat Yehudit Yetta Bat Reuven Hakohen and Moshe Ben Binyamin.

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VAYEIRAH – EIGHT WORDS

THIS COLUMN IS DEDICATED L'ILUI NISHMAS יצחק אלימלך ז"ל בן עקיבא זאב הלוי

The Cohens were a typical family from a typical community, and like many families, they had good kids and their typical ups and downs. During one season, their son Dovid was giving them a bit of a hard time. It was nothing crazy or terribly unusual, but there seemed to be a recurring theme: phone calls. The school would call. "Mr. Cohen, you really need to talk to Dovid. He's been acting out in class." The camp director would call. "We really don't like calling parents during camp, but we're going to have Dovid call you. If you could please speak to him and remind him that we need him to be respectful and follow directions."

Sometimes, Dovid would sleep at a friend's house, and afterward the parents would say, "We love having Dovid over. Maybe next time, though, you could remind him that when we say it's time for bed, he needs to follow the rules of the house." Dovid was a good kid. He just had his hiccups. Mr. Cohen appreciated the feedback, and of course, he knew that sometimes his son needed direction. Yet, he also did not want to become the father whose primary role was to deliver criticism. He didn't want Dovid to see his name on the phone and think, "What did I do wrong now?"

So, Mr. Cohen was very intentional about how he spoke to his son. Whenever there was something difficult to discuss, he would surround it with a generous amount of warmth and positivity. "Dovid, you're such a sweetheart. You have so much energy and so many talents - but when we go to someone else's house, we must remember that every family has their own rules. Let's work on listening when they tell you it's time for bed. We're so proud of you." Or, when Dovid called from camp: "Ah, my Dovid! It's so good to hear your voice. I love getting to talk to you, even when you're away at camp. We got such a nachas call about you, and they also mentioned that sometimes you need a little extra direction. Let's work on staying focused and listening to your counselors. I'm so proud of you, and I can't wait to see you when you get home." That was Mr. Cohen's recipe: when correction was necessary, it came wrapped in an unmistakable message of love.

There is a remarkable insight said in the name of **Rav Chaim Kanievsky**, ZT"l, that highlights this idea. Avraham Avinu and Yitzchak Avinu were father and son for decades. Surely, they must have shared thousands upon thousands of conversations. Yet from all those conversations, the Torah preserves only eight words that Avraham says directly to Yitzchak (Bereishis 22:7): "*And he said, 'Here I am, my son.'*"

And then Avraham said (ibid. 22:8), "*Hashem will provide for Himself the lamb for the offering, my son.*" Eight words - and of those eight words, two are "בְּנִי" - my son." Twenty-five percent. Of all the words the Torah could have preserved from the conversations between this father and son, a full quarter of Avraham's words to Yitzchak are simply: Bni, my son. Perhaps the Torah is teaching us something profound about the language between parents and children.

There will be times when we need to correct. There will be phone calls from school. There will be moments when we have to say no, set a limit, or tell a child that something needs to change, but what is the ratio? How much bni surrounds those words? The Akeidah was perhaps the most difficult walk a father and son could ever take together. Yet, after their conversation, the Torah tells us: "And the two of them walked together." When there is enough bni in the relationship, even the difficult conversations do not have to pull parent and child apart. They can still walk *yachdav* (together).

SUGARY SAYING OF THE WEEK

BY RABBI MENACHEM LOMNER

"When you are happy for others, they will also want to join in your happiness."

When Yitzchak was born, Sarah Imeinu said (Bereishis 21:6) that "*anyone who heard will rejoice with me.*" How did she know that the others would join her in her happiness? The answer is that she always cared for others. She cried with them when they were sad and laughed with them in their times of happiness. When you are there for others, they will reciprocate and be there for you. So, let's make sure to be there for people!

DELICIOUS DVAR BY RABBI DOVID ORLOFSKY
VAYEIRAH – TOUGH LOVE



Parshas Vayeirah concludes with the dramatic story of Akeidas Yitzchak, where Hashem tells Avraham Avinu (Bereishis 22:2): “Take your son, your only son, the son that you love, Yitzchak, and bring him up a mountain and offer him to me as a Korban.” Avraham understood this quite literally to mean that he was going to have to shecht (slaughter) his son. Hashem said, “I threw in a little wiggle room there, because I said, ‘bring him up as a Korban’ - I didn’t say you have to actually burn him.” Yet, Avraham was prepared to do it. Rashi tells us the conversation. Hashem said, “Take your son.” Avraham replied, “I have two sons; Yitzchak is the only son of Sarah, but Yishmael is the only son of Hagar.”

“Get the one you love.”

“I love both of them.”

“Yitzchak,” Hashem finally stated with no room for uncertainty.

What was the exchange here? Hashem comes to you and says that he wants you to take your only son and bring him as a living Karbon up on the mountain, and you really don’t know who I’m talking about?” **Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, ZT”L**, gives an interesting answer. Sarah says, “Yishmael is trouble - Send him away,” and Avraham didn’t want to do it. Then Hashem said, “Listen to Sarah - she knows what she’s talking about.” So, he sent away his son. Now he came back, obviously, because he’s one of the people accompanying Avraham along with Eliezer. We also know that in Parshas Chayei Sarah, Yishmael does teshuvah at the end. As such, he seems to be a more complicated character than would appear at first blush. Avraham Avinu’s total intention with sending away Yishmael is because he hoped that the separation would accomplish for Yishmael what the *kiruv* (closeness) accomplished for Yitzchak.

There was a movement for a while in parenting called “tough love” which believed that if a parent indulges their children and let them do whatever they want, they are not doing the kids a favor. In fact, there are two different types of child abuse. One is physical beatings and verbal abuse, while the other one is called neglect. A parent who tells a kid, “You don’t have to go to school, you don’t have to brush your teeth, you don’t have to go to bed, and you can eat all the candy you want” - That’s just as much child abuse. That’s called neglect. If one cared about their kid, certain limits would be set for him. The idea of tough love was to be able to get a kid to understand that our decisions have consequences, and if we want to do certain things, then we’re going to have to face the consequences of those actions.

Sarah wanted Yishmael sent away because she was afraid of what his influence would be on her son, Yitzchak, but Avraham’s intention was that by sending him away, that separation, he would appreciate being with Avraham. He had obviously reappeared when Yitzchak was 37 years old; that’s 35 years later. Avraham had hoped that he had grown so much from that experience of the separation that he was now ready to be on the same level as Yitzchak. Every child must be approached as an individual, and it must be figured out what approach would work for them. This is the challenge that all the parents have in life.

SUGAR RUSH ON 613 MITZVOS BY R’ ELI REIT
MITZVAH # 233 - YI’UD

If a Jew buys a Jewish maidservant who is less than twelve years old, then he must marry her. His son can marry her instead of himself. This Mitzvah is referred to as “yi’ud”. If the owner doesn’t marry her, he should help her get redeemed. This Mitzvah only applies in the time when they had the Mitzvah of Yovel (which was when there was a Bais Hamikdash). The Pasuk (Shemos 21:8) says, “*if the master thinks badly of her and didn’t marry her and she is redeemed...*” This hints that the master was really supposed to have married her, and if he doesn’t, then she should be redeemed. The point is that if he marries her, then he will protect her from trouble.

SHALOM BAYIS AND THE PARSHA
BY RABBI YITZ GREENFIELD

WORDS CREATE REALITY – ESPECIALLY IN MARRIAGE

Every year, on Rosh Hashana we read about Avraham’s final test, Akeidas Yitzchak. The story of the Akeidah starts out (Bereishis 22:1): “*And it happened after these words that Hashem tested Avraham, and He said ‘Avraham,’ and he said, ‘Here I am.’*” Rashi wants to know which words is this referring to? The previous Pasuk records only that Avraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines for many days. What words is the Torah referring to? Rashi’s second explanation is truly eye-opening and contains a startling message for us. Rashi says ‘after these words’ is referring to the words of Yishmael. Yishmael would pride himself on Yitzchak saying, I was circumcised at the age of 13, and I did not protest! You were just a little eight-day-old baby when you were circumcised. You had no choice!”

According to Rashi, Yitzchak answered Yishmael and said, “Do you try to instill fear in me by boasting about what you did with one organ? If Hashem would say to me, ‘sacrifice yourself before me,’ I would not refrain from doing it!” After Yitzchak said these words, he created the possibility of Hashem testing Avraham with this exact test. Yitzchak created the test of Akeidas Yitzchak with his words. We see the whole world was created with words, as it says (Avos 5:1): “*With ten utterances the world was created*”. How can we take the message of this Pasuk and apply it to our marriages? Firstly, we can keep in mind that our reality is created by our words. Words are so powerful that I tell my clients the ‘D’ word should never be said in their homes. Even in a moment of anger, it should not exist in their vocabulary! Secondly, we should be using our words daily to deepen our connection to our spouse. My Torah Marriage System includes (among other things) one compliment and one appreciation every day during quality time. How does said appreciation sound?

Each spouse says powerful connecting words, and that has a transformative effect. Our lives are enriched in countless ways by our spouse. Starting a compliment with the words ‘I noticed...’ will get us into the healthy habit of noticing instead of taking for granted. Mentioning what we noticed, followed by how that action made you feel, is the way to transform a relationship. For example, “I noticed you took out the garbage; that made me feel like we were a good team because I didn’t have ask you.” A husband can say, “I noticed you had so much patience with our kids tonight at supper, that made me feel so grateful that I married such a compassionate, kind woman.” A wife can say, “I noticed you took our daughter out for ice-cream that made me feel taken care of when I had some time for myself.”

This week let’s try to keep in mind the message of this Pasuk and take advantage of the power of our words. The word ‘divorce’ should be removed from our vocabulary. Let’s use noticing statements followed by how the action we noticed made us feel. It’s not easy to focus on all the wonderful qualities in our spouse, especially if we are entrenched in negativity. Humans are naturally wired to notice the negative instead of the positive, but with practice and effort we can turn this habit around. Even if it feels strange to say in the beginning, keep at it until it comes naturally. Hashem should bless our efforts with success and shine the light of Shalom Bayis into our homes.

Summary: We are currently discussing the idea that humble people hate positions of authority and have mentioned that leadership over others causes leaders to die younger than their non-leader counterparts.

*The Ramchal now makes a final observation on this topic: “**The general principle in the matter: Rabbanus is nothing but a heavy burden on the shoulders of its bearer. For as long as a man is sitting alone in his house, merely a part of humanity, he is held accountable only for himself. But once he assumed a position of Rabbanus and dominion, already he is held accountable for every person under his authority because it is incumbent on him to watch over all of them, pasture them with knowledge and understanding, and straighten their deeds.**” (Mesilas Yesharim, Chapter 22)*

Someone who has no power over others is only responsible for the wrongs that he does himself. However, writes **Rabbi Avigdor Miller**, ZT”L (in *Ohr Avigdor*), one who is a leader will be held to a higher standard: He could have influenced people to improve, and therefore he is responsible. Wealthy people are also held responsible because wealthy people can influence others. The Gemara (Sukkah 29b) says that rich people lose their wealth because they didn't use their pull to make other people obey the Torah. A rich man has tremendous power; he can open his mouth, and people are afraid of him. Therefore, anybody who has authority, wealth, or fame should know that Hashem gave that to him for a purpose, and he must utilize it in order to spread *Yiras Shamayim* (Fear of Hashem) and proper behavior among the people, and he's going to be held responsible.

The Ramchal concludes: “**If he does not do all this, our Sages declared – ‘their sins are inscribed on your head’ (Midrash Devarim Rabba 1:13).**” (*ibid.* Chapter 22)

Rabbi Miller adds that this is why a Kohen Gadol is held responsible if somebody killed someone else unintentionally. The killer must remain in a city of refuge until the Kohen Gadol dies. The Kohen Gadol must suffer the fact that all these people are sitting in cities of refuge and hoping that he will die soon so that they can be released. He is responsible for the actions of the people, and he's also responsible for not praying sufficiently for them. Authority is too heavy a responsibility. Based on what we have been saying, does this all mean that no one should ever take any leadership positions? Should every Rabbi, Principal, shul president, or community activist just step down? Doesn't the Mishna (Avos 2:5) tell us, “*In a place where there are no leaders, strive to be a leader.*” So, at the end of the day, how are we supposed to look at leadership?

Rabbi Efreim Goldberg explains that certainly, the Ramchal is not trying to talk us out of a life of service of the masses. He posits that we should use our talents to lead and inspire others. Yet, while we should remember to take what we do seriously, we should not take ourselves seriously. People get into trouble in authoritative positions when those positions inflate one's ego, and they start to demand honor for themselves. One must learn a balance to draw fulfillment and satisfaction from their work, but not to make it about oneself. *To be continued in two weeks, with the Help of Hashem.*

SHORT STORIES OF THE WEEK BY YONI SCHWARTZ

In the final days of his life, **Rabbi Yisrael Salanter**, ZT”L, was in tremendous pain. As he lay on his deathbed, someone came to him who was struggling in a certain area of life. What did Rabbi Yisrael Salanter do? He gave him *chizuk* (encouragement), inspiration, motivation, and guidance on how to approach the situation. In the last days of his life, he spent his time thinking about how he could help another person. Even while he was suffering, he was thinking about how he could alleviate the suffering of someone else. **Rav Yisrael Belsky**, ZT”L, went through a series of very difficult medical complications and had to undergo a highly specialized surgery. His hospital was competent, but another nearby hospital had better specialists. When he was offered the opportunity to switch hospitals he responded as follows: “If I switch hospitals, the people working here might feel that they're being given the message that they're not competent, and it might hurt their feelings. I don't want someone's feelings to be hurt because of me. This hospital is good enough, so it's okay for me to stay here.”

There were two female Israeli soldiers who were close friends. One of them developed a severe cough that none of the doctors knew how to treat. One of them suggested that they visit Rebbetzin Kanievsky. Since it was their first time in Bnei Brak, they weren't familiar with the area and asked a man with a black hat which bus stop they should get off at. By mistake, the person gave them the wrong stop, so they had to walk an extra forty minutes in the heat. When they arrived, they encountered that same person. He went out of his way to apologize for giving them the wrong bus stop and reimburse them for any extra money they might have had to spend on another bus because of his mistake. They were very moved by his thoughtfulness: even though he had made a mistake, he was able to see the situation from another person's perspective and take responsibility for it. That simple act of consideration made a tremendous kiddush Hashem for these two soldiers.

Comment: Why was Avraham Avinu considered great? It wasn't his overwhelming wealth, nor was it his military prowess. It was his other centeredness. He saw a palace in flames, a world gone mad, and yet he never got paralyzed by the age-old question of why bad things happen to good people. He dedicated his life to being a living answer to that question. “If people need help and I can help them, then I must.” That's what separated him from Noach. That's what it means when Hashem said, “Walk in front of me.”

Instead of waiting for Hashem to act, Avraham took the first step towards alleviating the suffering of others. We are each called upon to do that. Avraham taught us that the response to others' pain isn't a question to Hashem, but a cue for us to take the first step.

MILK'N'HONEY FROM JERUSALEM **BY RABBI JONATHAN TAUB** **VAYEIRAH - A PRISONER CANNOT** **FREE HIMSELF**

There's a striking detail tucked into this week's parsha. Three angels come to visit Avraham Avinu - and Chazal tell us each one came with a distinct mission: one to inform Sarah she'd have a son, one to overturn Sedom, and one specifically to heal Avraham after his bris. Here's the question the commentators ask: why did Avraham need an angel sent just for him? Everyone else in his household had gone through the same bris on the same day. They were in pain, too.

More strikingly, our sages tell us that Avraham carried a precious stone around his neck, a stone so powerful that any sick person who simply looked at it was healed on the spot. If that's true, why didn't Avraham just look at his own stone and heal himself? Why did he need an angel at all?

The answer is one of the most human truths in the whole Torah: the stone could heal everyone - except the man wearing it. Avraham's household, his servants, and everyone around him looked at the stone and were cured instantly. Yet, Avraham himself could not. As the Gemara (Berachos 5b) puts it: “*ein chavush matir atzmo* - a prisoner cannot release himself from his own prison cell.” It doesn't matter how much power, how many resources, or how much healing you're able to offer everyone else. You cannot pull yourself out. For that, you need someone else to come.

So, specifically for Avraham - the same man who could heal all of humanity - Hashem sent an angel. Not because Avraham lacked the power to heal. He had more of it than anyone, but healing yourself isn't a matter of having the tool. It's a limitation built into the human condition itself.

Perhaps that's the real lesson here. We often assume that the strongest, most capable people - the ones who help everyone else, who hold the community together, who seem to have all the answers - should be able to take care of themselves, too. Yet, the Torah teaches otherwise. Even Avraham, the man with the healing stone, needed someone from outside to come and lift him up.

So, the question worth asking is: who around us is carrying the stone for everyone else, and quietly needs someone to send them an angel? Also, are we willing sometimes to admit that we are that person too, and that needing help isn't a failure of strength, but simply the truth of being human?

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