

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA


RABBI BINYOMIN YUDIN
GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

Hashem said to Avram, “Go you forth from your land...” ... Rabbi Yitzchak said: this may be compared to a man who was traveling from place to place when he saw a castle in flames. He said, “Is it possible that this castle lacks a person to look after it? The owner of the building looked out and said, “I am the owner of the castle.” Similarly, because Avraham our father said, “Is it possible that this castle has no guide, no one to look after it?” the Holy Blessed One looked out and said to him, “I am the Master of the Universe.” ... Hence, God said to Avraham, *Lech Lecha*. (Bereshis Rabbah 39:1)

This midrash seems to tell us the origin story of our forefather Avraham’s relationship with Hashem. The metaphor, however, is quite confusing. Avraham does not become aware of God’s existence through marveling at the complexity of a structure, as one would assume. The castle does not provide evidence of a master of the manor to Avraham. It is only when he sees it burning that he assumes that there must be someone in control.

The question of why bad things happen to good people is one that philosophers and religious thinkers have grappled with since time immemorial. The seeming contradiction between an omniscient, omnipotent and altru-

istic creator on the one hand, and what seems to be clear evidence of evil on the other leaves us in a place of tension. For many, especially those who have experienced evil at the hands of perpetrators who seem to be doing just fine, this contradiction does not create a curiosity. The question of why bad things happen to good people becomes rhetorical. It is more of a statement that there is no law and no judge.

Avraham, however, teaches us the essence of faith. True faith is not arriving at an answer, it is a constant conversation, a curiosity at the ubiquitous contradictions of existence. We look at the world and we marvel at the complicated and intricate systems of our universe. We then see the seeming chaos, and we begin to wrestle with the amazing idea that our world seems to tend both toward perfection and entropy at the very same time. When we remain open to this, asking the question sincerely, we can begin to recognize that what seems to be a contradiction is really a result of our own inability to see the larger picture. We are too close to see how what we perceive as conflict is really the beautiful, perfect, intricacy of God’s plan. Faith is then to remain in awe and curious. Avraham asked the question sincerely and was answered by Hashem. If we keep in mind the perfection of Hashem’s plan, we can then begin to seek answers, and like our forefather Avraham, Hashem looks out at us and says, “Here I am”. 

are very sorry, but we have some bad news to share. It looks like there was a glitch with our equipment when we photographed the wedding. Your pictures are not coming out. Of course, we’ll refund your money. Again, we are terribly sorry.” Sarah was crushed. A little later, as she lamented to her friend of her misfortune, her friend told her something

A TIMELY HALACHA

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

In this week’s *Parasha*, Avraham is given the *mitzvah* to circumcise himself and all the males in his household.

Shulchan Aruch (Y.D.265:12) rules that “it is customary to make a festive meal following the *bris* ceremony.” The meal is held in order to add to the joyous occasion and for the Divine commandment to be cherished (*Machzor Vitri*). The *Ramoh* adds that there should be at least a *minyan* (ten male adults) present at the *bris seudah*.

There are those who contend that the Talmudic dictum “there can be no celebration without the eating of meat” (*Pesachim* 109A) is applicable today and therefore maintain that it is incumbent to serve a meat meal (*Magen Avraham* O.C. 249:6). Others hold that fish as well as chicken fulfill this requirement (*Zocher Habris* 25:7). The *Levush* and others hold that that the obligation to eat meat applied only during the Temple Era when we had sacrifices. This is the basis for many who serve a dairy or *pareve* meal at a *bris* (*Os Habris* brought in the *Otzer Habris* p. 165).

Bread and wine should be served at the *seudah* (*Chochmas Adam* 149:24). Even at a Shabbos *bris* where the whole *shul* attends a *kiddush* after *davening*, one should still make a point of having a *minyan* who wash at the *seudas mitzvah*. At the very least, a *minyan* should join for dessert and *Birkas*

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that not only comforted her, but also changed her outlook on life. “I know you were looking forward to always having those pictures to look back at to see the smile on your face on your big day. But if you ever want to see a smiling face, all you have to do is look in a mirror—because you can be someone who is always smiling.”

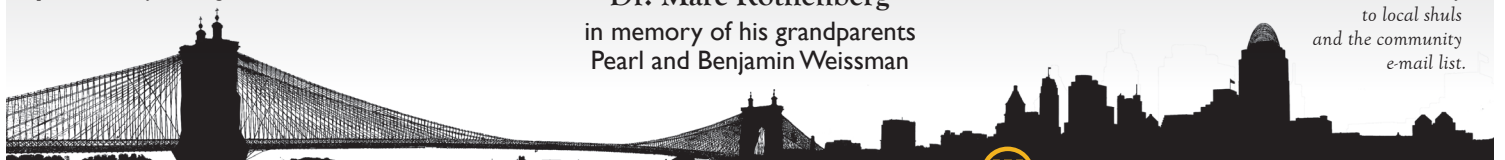
GREAT ACTS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE

YONAH AND SARAH HAD A BEAUTIFUL WEDDING. Now they were waiting for the pictures. Sarah was a nostalgic person and was excited to put together her own wedding album. One day soon afterward, the photographer called. “We

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A TIMELY HALACHA

CONTINUED

Hamazon (R' D Nuestadt).

We try not to invite anyone explicitly to a *seudas bris*, for one may not refuse to participate once he has been invited (*Ramah* 265:12 based on a *Gemoroh Pesachim* 113b). Consequently, instead of formally inviting the guests, one merely informs that a meal is taking place (*Pischei Teshuvah*).

Various *piyyutim* are sung during the meal and *Birkas Hamazon*. One such example is the liturgical poem, “*Yom L'yabasha*” (which discusses the miraculous splitting of the *Yam Suf*) written by R' Yehudah Halevi, author of the *Kuzari*. It is recited at the *bris* meal because of its reference to *bris milah* in the 5th and 7th stanzas. Additionally, *Yalkut Shimoni* (*Yirmiyah* 321) notes that Hashem said, “because the Jews had themselves circumcised [when they left Egypt], they merited that I split the sea for them.”

Aside for that which the leader adds in the beginning of *Birkas Hamazon*, there are six stanzas beginning with “*Harachaman*” (may the merciful One...) towards the end of *Birkas Hamazon* that are recited aloud by either the leader or by other guests designated for this honor. The first four of the six stanzas are blessings for the parents, the child, the *Sandek*, and the *mohel*. The last two stanzas are prayers for the coming of *Moshiach* and *Eliyahu Hanavi*, (the Angel of the Covenant). It follows that someone other than the father, *sandek*, or *mohel* should read those stanzas. 🥂

A PARASHA Q 4 U

RABBI DOVID SPETNER

How many people mentioned in *Parshas Noach* say something in *Parshas Lech Lecha*?

Bring this question to the Shabbos table
and see who knows the answer! 🥂



Kollel
“MoMENTum”
Israel trip

TIDBITS OF CINCINNATI JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

On the 10th of Av, 5675 (1915), the *Cincinnati Enquirer* reported a ruling of prominent rabbinic figure in Cincinnati, Rabbi Avraham Yaakov Gershon Lesser. Following the tremendous storm which had killed 15 Jews in Cincinnati (see *Cincinnati Torah, Parshas Matos-Masei* for more), the Turkish community planned a service of sacrificing three chickens and sprinkling their blood on the rubble of the house of the Rumi family, members of that community who had been killed in the storm. This was said to be a common practice in Turkey when tragedy befell a community, with the intent to atone for sin in order to protect the community from further tragedy. When leaders of the Turkish community invited Rabbi Lesser to the ceremony, he ruled that they may not, in fact, hold the ceremony at all. Rabbi Lesser told them that sacrifices were forbidden since the destruction of the Temple, in addition to the fact that chickens are not offered as sacrifices even in the Temple. The community acquiesced to Rabbi Lesser and did not hold their planned ceremony, but instead joined the general Cincinnati community in a day of prayer. 🥂

SOURCE: “Forbidden by Jewish law are proposed sacrifices for storm victims declared Rabbi Lesser.” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 15 Jul 1915. Cincinnati Judaica Fund.

Cincinnati Community Kollel's Annual Event A Taste of the Kollel 2018

PROGRAM

5:30PM

Reception

Hor d'oeuvres & Sushi Station

6:10PM

A Choice of 2 Mini Classes

Know Thyself - Inside & Out
Rabbi Meir Minster

Ultimate Football, Ultimate Frisbee Ultimate Mitzva
Rabbi Chaim Heinemann

6:30PM

Smorgasbord with carving stations

7:10PM

A Choice of 2 Mini Classes

Learn To Actualize Your Potential in 15 Minutes Or Less!
Rabbi Yitzchok Preis

Serious Prayer... Seriously!
Rabbi Moshe D Zeffren

Special Session for Legacy Donors
with Moshe Bane

7:30PM

Dessert & Presentation
State of our Union: A Q & A Conversation
with OU President Moshe Bane

There will be two special *Mincha minyanim*
1:52PM at the Kollel and at the event at 6:00PM sharp in the Mt. Adams room

A Buffet of
TORAH, FOOD & FRIENDS
Sunday, October 21st 2018
The Summit Hotel

Cincinnati Community Kollel

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