

## A PARASHA THOUGHT

### What's In a Test

RABBI  
YAAKOV  
MARCHUK



The Mishna in *Avos* (5:3) tells us that Hashem tested Avraham ten times because of the love He had for Avraham and he withstood all of them. In this week's *parasha* Avraham is tested numerous times. The *parasha* begins with him healing from his *bris milah* at the age of ninety-nine years old. He had to send away his son Yishmael, and the hardest test of them all was the binding of Yitzchak. In subsequent *parashot* we find that Yitzchak and Yaakov are also tested many times. What is the purpose of these tests? What can we learn from them?

Rav Dessler (vol. 2, page 162) explained that the *avos* (forefathers) each excelled in a specific *middah* (trait) – Avraham in kindness, Yitzchak in the of fear of Heaven, and Yaakov in honesty. However, if we look closely, many of the tests the *avos* face seem to be contrary to kindness. In the test of *Lech Lecha*, Avraham is told to leave his aging parents instead of caring for them. Later he is told to send away Yishmael. And with the *akeidah* he was prepared to kill his son. Yaakov as well has to trick Esav to get the *brachos* (blessings) from his father. Additionally, he tricks Lavan to get the sheep he deserves. This begs the question why are the tests in contrast to Avraham's primary *middah*? The *meforshim* (commentators) explain that purpose of a *nisayon* (test) is to bring out the best person can be. The root of the word *nisayon*, the Ramban tells us, comes from the word *nes*, to hoist, and that the purpose of a test is to lift a person up and to bring out his best in the service of Hashem.

The *middah* of *chesed* (kindness) is very great. However, someone whose *chesed* is not guided by the Torah's vision of *chesed* may end up using his positive qualities for the wrong reasons and, instead of doing *chesed*, he will use the kindness in the wrong way.

We find an example of *chesed* gone wrong in this week's *parasha* where Lot invited the angels into his home. In S'dom hospitality was a capital crime, punishable by death. Being that Lot had spent many years in the house of Avraham, he put his life on the line to do *chesed*. However, when the local towns people found out what Lot did, they stormed his house in order to kill him. Lot's response is shocking. He tells the locals "leave my guests alone, and instead take my two daughters and do what you wish with them." We see Lot's tremendous sacrifice for *chesed*, clearly something he learned from Avraham. However, his *chesed* was not Torah *chesed*. The Torah does not want parents to give up their children for *chesed*.

For this reason, the test of Avraham focused specifically on the *middah* he excelled in – to refine the *middah* of *chesed* so that his *chesed* would be on Hashem's terms. For this reason, Avraham's tests almost all run contrary to his theme of *chesed*. The purpose is to bring out in Avraham the result that his kindness is guided by the will of Hashem and that he does the *mitzvos* on the Torah's terms. We find similarly that King Shaul, who was sent to war with Amalek, had misplaced compassion and, instead of following Hashem's order to kill out Amalek and all the animals, he kept some alive, and for that he was stripped of his kingdom.

The *Meor Enayim* writes that, just like Avraham, every Jew goes through his own ten tests in this world. The tests are given to us because of the deep love Hashem has for us. 🌟

*Mazal Tov to*

R' Heinemann's Daf Hashovua Shiur  
that just completed Meseches Makkos! 🌟

PLEASE KEEP TINOK BEN SHOSHANA IN MIND IN YOUR TEFILLOS

## LEARNING WITH THE KOLLEL (CHOSHEN MISHPAT)

WITH  
RABBI MEIR MINSTER

*For I have loved him, because he commands his children... doing charity and justice. (Bereishis 18:19 translation – Artscroll Stone Chumash)*

Hashem explains his new special relationship with Avraham, that he will not destroy S'dom without consulting with him, because Avraham commands his children to keep charity and justice. This special relationship with Hashem, connected to justice, manifests itself in the Jewish courtroom in two interesting ways.

According to Torah law, serving as a judge in almost any capacity requires a special *semicha* ordination that is no longer available today. This *semicha* was passed down from teacher to student in an unbroken chain reaching all the way back to Moshe, ensuring that the student was the next link in the Sinai tradition. Interestingly, this *semicha* could only be granted in the land of Israel. The *Toras Chaim* explains that this is because there is an actual passing of the presence of Hashem, initially granted to Moshe, which is also passed along from teacher to student at the time of the granting of this *semicha*. Just as prophesy, which is a special connection with Hashem's presence, is only (ordinarily) available in land of Israel, so too the *semicha* and its accompanying connection to Hashem's presence, can only be conferred in the land of Israel.

➡ CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE ➡

Sponsorship & feedback:  
parasha@cincynollel.org

Sponsored in honor of the  
**M'saymei Meseches Makkos!**  
By the Heinemanns

Cincinnati Torah  
is distributed weekly  
to local shuls  
and the community  
e-mail list.



## LEARNING WITH THE KOLLEL (CHOSHEN MISHPAT)

CONTINUED

Second, it was traditional in the courts of ancient times for the Judges to sit completely wrapped in their *talaisim*. The act of the Judges wrapping themselves is considered the start of the trial for *halachic* purposes. One reason offered for this wrapping was to display deference to the presence of Hashem that stands together with the sitting Judges during the trial. [Rashi, earlier in this chapter (18:1), finds a hint to this presence of Hashem in the courtroom, when the Torah describes Avraham as sitting when Hashem appears to him.]

We daven three times a day asking Hashem to return our Judges as they were in earlier times. By genuinely appreciating what we have lost, may we merit to see the return of our Judges and the presence of Hashem in our midst. 🕯

## A SHINING EXAMPLE

As he is a fabulous speaker, educator, and an engaging personality, Rabbi Dr. Akiva Tatz often has people he meets and teaches at seminars across the globe that want to stay in touch. Once, there was an influential American business man who, after hearing Rabbi Dr. Tatz, requested a chance to learn regularly with him, and he acquiesced. This man was so influential that the next time he had reason to visit Israel, the Prime Minister asked for a meeting with the man. The next stop the man wanted to make was to visit Rabbi Dr. Tatz in person at his home in Telz-Stone where he resided at that point. Now, Mrs. Tatz is a laid-back individual who believes it is worth sacrificing her home being spotless for more involvement with her children and their lives, even if they were expecting an important guest. Her daughter Ruthie was of a different mind though, and the fact that her house was not spotless when such a distinguished guest was coming was bothering her immensely. Reminding her mother of the impending guest as well did not move her mother into frantic action to begin tidying the house either. And when the guest did knock and the house wasn't clean, she didn't know what to do with herself. As her father came out of his study to greet his guest, she walked by him and said in a harsh whisper, "I hate this! Our house is a pigsty!" Rabbi Dr. Tatz looked over at his guest after gesturing him to a chair and said, "Give me another minute please, I must have a word with my daughter." Realizing that what she said was not respectful to her mother, Ruthie's stomach did a few somersaults on the way in to the room for her private talk with her father. "Ruthie, your mother is the most amazing person I know, and even though I too enjoy when things look neat and tidy, I'd rather have the woman your mother is be the one to be my wife and partner in life and in raising our children. What you

## A BA'AL HATURIM FOR YOU

When Hashem, we are told, decided to tell Avraham of the impending doom of the city of S'dom, the *passuk* tells us that the decision was made because Avraham would command his children after him to guard the ways of Hashem. The last letters of the words that make up that statement in the *passuk*, points out Ba'al Haturim, are *Tav, Vav, Reish, Hay*, spelling out the word Torah, our guidebook to the ways of Hashem. 🕯

can do for me is clean the living room every day so that we have a clean room to enjoy." With that, Rabbi Dr. Tatz walked out to talk with his guest. Ruthie relates that the lesson her father taught her about priorities in life and who we love at a time when she knows she deserved to be scolded, has stayed with her forever after. 🕯



### Annual EVENT

You are cordially invited to attend the Kollel's Annual Event  
**Celebrating New Learning and New Leadership**

תנו כבוד לחוריה

We will be graced by the presence of  
**Moreinu Harav Shmuel Kamenetsky** שליט

**Rabbi Yisrocher Frand** שליט  
GUEST SPEAKER

Featuring an elaborate  
Taste of the Kollel Reception Dinner  
in coordination with the  
**Holocaust & Humanity Center**  
featuring Kollel led tours

**Sunday, November 7th**  
Cincinnati Museum Center

Reception 5:50 - 7:00pm  
Formal Program 7:00 - 7:45pm  
Followed by dessert buffet

Concert \$22 per person. Reservations Required  
[WWW.CINCINNATI.KOLLEL.ORG/ANNUALEVENTS782](http://WWW.CINCINNATI.KOLLEL.ORG/ANNUALEVENTS782)

EVENT SPONSOR

**CALMED**

**RABBI FRAND**  
HONORARY  
DE-MED-ESTIMELMAN

**CINCINNATI Community KOLLEL**

## THE LEGENDARY GOLEM OF PRAGUE (PART III)

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

In the century since the publication of *Niflaos Maharal* (in 1909) several rabbis and scholars have challenged its authorship and authenticity. Rabbi Menachem Mendel Eckstein, rabbi of Congregation B'nei Yakov (now the Green Road Synagogue) in Cleveland, Ohio, and member of the Agudas Ha-Rabonim until his passing in 1946, published a short pamphlet titled *Sefer Yetzirah*. In his pamphlet, Rabbi Eckstein completely undermines the authenticity of *Niflaos Maharal* based on the fact that the stories contained within about the Yossele the Golem contradict the rulings of the *Rishonim* and *Achronim* in their discussion of the *halachic* status of a *golem*. Dr. Avraham Ovdiah, who published an outstanding biography (in Hebrew) on the Maharal, agrees with Rabbi Eckstein's conclusion that *Niflaos Maharal* was not authored by the Maharal's son-in-law – Rabbi Yitzchak Katz. In more recent years, Rabbi Dr. Shmayer Z. Leiman adds significant evidence that *Niflaos Maharal* was a product of Rabbi Yudel Rosenberg's imagination. Finally, Curt Leviant, who translated *Niflaos Maharal* into English (*The Golem*, Yale University Press, 2007) is of the opinion that the book belongs in the fiction section.

If Rabbi Yitzchak Katz did not author *Niflaos Maharal*, then we must look elsewhere for evidence that the Maharal did indeed create a *golem*. In the coming weeks we will present some of the issues that the above-mentioned rabbis and scholars have raised with the authenticity and antiquity of *Niflaos Maharal* and discover if the book was fact or fiction.

To be continued... 🕯