

A PARASHA THOUGHT

He's Involved In Your Life



RABBI  
YAAKOV  
MARCHUK

Each of the Avos excelled in a specific area of service to Hashem.

Avraham was known for his legendary *chessed*. Even after he had created a revolution by introducing the service of Hashem and not idols, he never ceased from personally caring for his guests. In truth, Avraham used his famous *hachnosas orchim* to teach people about Hashem. The Gemara (*Sotah* 10b) gives us insight into his method. After someone would eat a meal in the house of Avraham they would come to thank Avraham for the meal. Avraham would respond "Why are you thanking me? Thank G-d!" The Gemara continues to say that Avraham's guests would immediately express their thanks to Hashem. It

seems that this was the way that Avraham taught the masses about Hashem - by giving them a good meal and telling them to say *Birchas Hamazon*.

How did Avraham manage to transform people into believers just by telling them to bless Hashem? A beautiful explanation I once heard is that the main belief that people had in those times was that G-d had created the world but was no longer involved in people's day-to-day issues. In people's minds, G-d was too busy "doing God things" to care about their daily struggles. (See Ramban at the end of *Parshas Bo*.) Avraham dispelled this misconception by personally caring for each one of his guests, despite being one of the wealthiest people in the world.

When people saw this, they were overwhelmed. Avraham told them that just as it was not beneath him to personally care for their mundane needs and serve them, despite having many servants who could do so, so too it is not beneath G-d to care for your mundane needs. When the people saw the example of Avraham's personal involvement, they were able to translate that to Hashem and become believers in Him, not as some abstract force but as a loving caring Father who personally cares about the

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

THIS WEEK WITH  
RABBI YITZCHAK PREIS

Q. I understand that Lot served matzah because this story was taking place at the time of year that would later become Pesach. But why then did Avraham plan to serve what is described as "Pas lechem" and "ugos" rather than matzah?

A. Due to this very question the Imrei Noam says that the encounter with Avraham was "K'chom hayom" midday of "Erev Pesach" when it is actually prohibited to eat matzah. For that reason, Avraham intended to serve something like an egg-matzah product rather than actual matzah. Subsequently, the guests traveled to Lot and joined him at night when it was actually Pesach, and he therefore prepared real matzah. This answer would seemingly not work according to the *Mechilta* (*halachic medrash*) quoted by Rashi (*Shemos* 12:41). "On the 15th of Nissan the angels came to give Avraham the news; on the 15th of Nissan [the following year] Yitzchok was born, ..." This would indicate that the meal served by Avraham was on Pesach itself. I am eager to hear if any readers can answer the question in a way that would work with this *Mechilta*.

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## THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

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**Q** Did Lot have a son? I see that the angels said, “Who do you have here: Sons-in-law, and sons and daughters,” but I don’t see any other details about any sons?

**A.** Rashi understands the comment of the angel to simply mean “IF you have a son....” Rashi also comments that “sons” refers to grandsons. The Netziv explains that this would be indicated by the fact that sons-in-law are mentioned prior to these “sons” who are, in fact, the sons of these sons-in-law. 🤖

*Something always bugged you about the upcoming parasha (or last week’s)? Ask! Submit a question on the parasha by Monday at noon by emailing [parasha@cincykollel.org](mailto:parasha@cincykollel.org). Questions will be selected to address at the discretion of the Rabbi who is answering that week. Questions may be edited for brevity/clarity.*

## A PARASHA THOUGHT

CONTINUED

day-to-day struggles and challenges of the common man.

It is said in the name of the Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760) that every negative force in the world can be applied for good. His students asked about this idea. “What possible good can come from a *kofer* (heretic)?” Answered the Baal Shem, “When someone comes to you for a favor, you need to be a heretic. Don’t say G-d will help him. Rather, you yourself should go do it. However, when it comes to your needs, have faith in Hashem that he will help you.” Stories of our *gedolim* (Jewish sages) are full of tales of great people who spent their precious time dealing with the mundane needs of others, when they could have easily delegated those responsibilities to other people. Two small examples are about Rav Moshe Feinstein, who every Friday would receive a call from a woman with a very important *halachic* question for the leading Halachic authority of the time – what time should she light candles? Yet another woman would come to Rav Moshe to translate the letters she would receive from family members in Russia. A central lesson we learn from Avraham is that another Jew’s material needs should be viewed as our spiritual needs. 🤖



## HAFTORAH HAPPENINGS

RABBI YAAKOV MARCHUK

This week’s Haftorah tells two stories of the kindness that the *Navi* Elisha performed for two different women. In the first story the woman is introduced as the wife of one of the prophets, who cries to Elisha that her righteous husband had died leaving over debts, and now her two sons were about to be taken as collateral. The commentators explain that she was the wife of the *Navi* Ovadia who hid the prophets when Queen Ezeval was trying to kill them. He supported them from his own money, and when that ran out he was forced to take out loans with interest. Now that he had died his widow was left with the debt, to the point that all that she had left was one flask of oil.

Elisha tells her to collect as many vessels as she can get her hands on and begins to fill them with oil. Miraculously, the oil continues to flow and fill all the vessels that she had collected. When they ran out of vessels, the *posuk* writes that the oil stopped. Rav Chaim Shmulevitz (*Sichos Mussar*, p. 253) explained that although the oil was unlimited, the amount that the people retained was based on how much they had prepared to accept it. Similarly, in our connection to Torah, the Torah itself is unlimited, however the amount of Torah each of us will be able to absorb is based on how much we make ourselves proper vessels for that goal. Hashem will then fill those vessels without measure. 🤖

## TRACING OUR MINHAGIM

RABBI YEHUDAH LEVI

The twelve-month Jewish calendar differs from the secular Gregorian one in that it follows the lunar pattern, as opposed to the solar cycle. Interestingly, the names of each month are not Hebrew in origin, but Aramaic, stemming from the titles colloquially used in ancient Babylonian society. These names have been in use in Jewish culture from at least the 2nd century C.E, as the Jerusalem Talmud explicitly records how they were imported from Babylonia. Of specific note is the month we currently find ourselves in; the eighth month of the year commonly known as Cheshvan. Curiously, in Talmudic and even pre-Talmudic writings, “Cheshvan” is referred to as “Mar-Cheshvan,” begging the question as to why this variation exists. One approach to this anomaly is that the true title of the month is Cheshvan, with the moniker “Mar,” or “Bitter,” being added to allude to the dearth of Jewish calendrical celebrations observed in this month; the month is “bitter” because it does not contain any holidays. Another fascinating explanation is that the ancient Aramaic name of this month was “Marech- Schewan” which means “eighth-month,” highlighting that the accurate name is actually “Marcheshvan,” with “Cheshvan” being a corruption. It does appear that the word “Marcheshvan” is used more commonly, if not exclusively, in ancient writings. When this discrepancy began, I don’t know. 🤖

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