



SHABBAT ZEST

Parshat Vayeira 18th Cheshvan 5777

Torah Reading / Haftara:

Artscroll – p.78/1134

Living Torah – p.78/1060

SHABBAT TIMES:

Candle Lighting:
3:47pm

Kabbalat Shabbat
Davening: 6:30pm

Shabbat Morning
Davening: 9:15am

Mincha: After Kiddush

Shabbat Ends 5:00pm

NEXT SHABBAT
CHAYEI SARAH

CANDLE LIGHTING
@ 3:39 PM

This week the
Haftorah will be
read by ...

This week Shirley
and Lewis Lane are
sponsoring Kiddush
in memory of
Gertie Lane

UPCOMING EVENTS

5th-20th November –
20th International
Jewish Film Festival at
Odeon South Woodford

Parsha In a Nutshell

Genesis 18:1-22:24

G-d speaks to Abram, commanding him, “Go from your land, from your birthplace and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you.” There, G-d says, he will be made into a great nation. Abram and his wife, Sarai, accompanied by his nephew Lot, journey to the land of Canaan, where Abram builds an altar and continues to spread the message of a one G-d.

A famine forces the first Jew to depart for Egypt, where beautiful Sarai is taken to Pharaoh’s palace; Abram escapes death because they present themselves as brother and sister. A plague prevents the Egyptian king from touching her, and convinces him to return her to Abram and to compensate the brother-revealed-as-husband with gold, silver and cattle.

Back in the land of Canaan, Lot separates from Abram and settles in the evil city of Sodom, where he falls captive when the mighty armies of Chedorlaomer and his three allies conquer the five cities of the Sodom Valley. Abram sets out with a small band to rescue his nephew, defeats the four kings, and is blessed by Malki-Zedek the king of Salem (Jerusalem).

G-d seals the Covenant Between the Parts with Abram, in which the exile and persecution (galut) of the people of Israel is foretold, and the Holy Land is bequeathed to them as their eternal heritage.

Still childless ten years after their arrival in the Land, Sarai tells Abram to marry her maidservant Hagar. Hagar conceives, becomes insolent toward her mistress, and then flees when Sarai treats her harshly; an angel convinces her to return, and tells her that her son will father a populous nation. Ishmael is born in Abram’s eighty-sixth year.

Thirteen years later, G-d changes Abram’s name to Abraham (“father of multitudes”), and Sarai’s to Sarah, and promises that a son will be born to them; from this child, whom they should call Isaac (“will laugh”), will stem the great nation with which G-d will establish His special bond. Abraham is commanded to circumcise himself and his descendants as a “sign of the covenant between Me and you.” Abraham immediately complies, circumcising himself and all the males of his household.

Haftorah

II Kings 4:1-37

In this week's Torah reading, G-d promises a child to Abraham and Sarah, despite childless Sarah's advanced age. This week's haftorah describes a similar incident that occurred many years later -- the prophet Elisha assuring an elderly childless woman that she will bear a child.

The haftorah discusses two miracles performed by the prophet Elisha. The first miracle involved a widow who was heavily in debt, and her creditors were threatening to take her two sons as slaves to satisfy the debt. When the prophet asked her what she had in her home, the widow responded that she had nothing but a vial of oil. Elisha told her to gather as many empty containers as possible -- borrowing from neighbors and friends as well. She should then pour oil from her vial into the empty containers. She did as commanded, and miraculously the oil continued to flow until the last empty jug was filled. The woman sold the oil for a handsome profit, and had enough money to repay her debts and live comfortably.

The second miracle: Elisha would often pass by the city of Shunam, where he would dine and rest at the home of a certain hospitable couple. This couple even made a special addition to their home, a guest room designated for Elisha's use. When the prophet learned that the couple was childless, he blessed the woman that she should give birth to a child in exactly one year's time. And indeed, one year later a son was born to the aged couple.

A few years later the son complained of a headache and died shortly thereafter. The Shunamit woman laid the lifeless body on the bed in Elisha's designated room, and quickly summoned the prophet. Elisha hurried to the woman's home and miraculously brought the boy back to life.

UPCOMING EVENTS

19th November – Motsei Shabbat – Board of Deputies President Questions and Answers @ 61 Traps Hill @ 5:30pm

29th January 2017 - The return of Shir. The fabulous klezmer band are coming back for an encore. Reserve Tickets with the Office now.

December – Chanukah Lightings – all 6.30pm – Doughnuts, hot drinks music and entertainment:

24th: Chigwell Green

25th: Buckhurst Hill,

Queens Rd

26th: Loughton

28th: Fullwell Cross

Roundabout

29th: Bell Hotel, Epping

31st: Gants Hill

Roundabout

Recurring Events

**Cheder OPEN
Mummy and Me**

Yahrzeits for the coming week 18th to 24th Cheshvan:

18. Kay Osborne – Father

19. Betty Jacobs – Husband

19. Lewis Jacobs – Father

20. Stanley Baskin – Father

20. Merle Lewis – Father

21. Wendy Clein – Mother

21. Nigel Conway – Mother

21. Howard Diamond – Father

22. Cyril Cowan – Daughter

22. Vivien Klein – Sister

22. Neville Reuben – Mother

23. Howard Diamond – Wife

A Little Deeper – Being a Giver

Abraham is on a mission to teach the world about G-d. Yet if G-d is an infinite force who encompasses everything and lacks nothing (He doesn't get tired, thirsty, restless or cold), how can He possibly be described?

The answer is found in what motivated G-d to create the world in the first place. He wasn't lonely. He wasn't bored. And it wasn't a science experiment. Yet G-d did lack one thing, so to speak. He lacked someone outside of Himself to nurture and bestow kindness upon. Thus the attribute of "giving" is the most essential thing we can say about G-d.

Abraham emulated G-d by performing endless acts of kindness. His tent, pitched in the middle of an intercity highway, was open on all four sides so that any traveller was welcome to stop in and enjoy a royal feast.

At the end of the meal, invariably the grateful guests would want to thank Abraham. "It is not I who you should thank," Abraham would reply. "I am only emulating the Almighty Who gives us life, provides our food, and sustains us moment by moment. To Him we should give thanks!"

To those who balked at the idea of thanking G-d, Abraham offered an alternative: Pay for the meal. Considering the astronomical price tag for a fabulous meal in the middle of a barren desert, Abraham succeeded in inspiring even the sceptics to "give G-d a try."

Our parsha begins with Abraham having just circumcised himself at age 99. We'd expect anyone in this condition to be recuperating in bed. Instead, Abraham is sitting at the entrance of his tent in search of guests. Yet on this day, no guests are in sight. G-d made a heat wave to ensure that no travellers were on the road - in order to give Abraham some much-needed rest. The ploy didn't work, however, because for Abraham, the pain of circumcision paled in comparison to the anguish of not doing kindness for others. So G-d had to send guests in order to spare Abraham pain!

"G-d appeared to Abraham as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men passing by. Abraham ran to greet them and said, 'Please come in! I'll bring some water, and you can wash up and rest..' Abraham hurried to Sarah's tent and said, 'Quickly make three cakes.' Abraham ran to his cattle, selected a choice one, and gave it to his son who rushed to prepare it..." (Genesis 18:1-8)

There's a lot to talk about here: How Abraham treats the guests royally and serves the finest foods, how he involves his family in the mitzvah, and his incredible zeal in making it all happen. Yet something about this sequence should be bothering us: At the beginning of the story, G-d appears to Abraham, and next thing you know, Abraham leaves to attend to three strangers. Imagine you're in the middle of speaking to the Queen of England. Would you ever say, "Hold on, there's some strangers walking by. I'll get back to you later!" So what made Abraham think leaving G-d was the right thing to do?

The answer is that there is an experience even greater than talking to G-d. To be like G-d. Human beings are created in the image of G-d. G-d is a giver. Thus, giving is our greatest form of spiritual expression.

Abraham was a wealthy man who had many servants. If so, why didn't he simply order his staff to serve the meal? We mistakenly think that "giving" is a drain on our time and resources. On the contrary, giving energizes and enlivens us. At the beginning of our parsha, Abraham is in such pain from the circumcision that he is only able to sit outside his tent. But when the guests pass by, he runs to greet them! And his energy is infectious: His wife and children also hurry to perform the mitzvah.

Imagine being born into great wealth and given a monthly allowance of £100,000. You never have to work a day in your life. You can play golf, go shopping, travel, lie on the beach. Everything easy, everything handed to you. The good life! Actually, it's not. Because after awhile, you'd get tired of "taking" all the time. A nagging voice persists: What is my contribution to this world?

The Talmud says there are four individuals who are "considered dead even while they're alive." The common denominator of these people is that (due to circumstantial limitations) they are unable to give.

Of course, the reason to treat others kindly is because we care about them. But just as crucial is what giving does for me. The act of "giving" makes me more sensitive, caring, compassionate and... G-d-like. Giving is the foundation of any relationship. When two people focus on giving to one another, the relationship flows in two directions - connecting, linking and forging the bond. But when the focus is on taking, the dynamic pulls in opposite directions - creating strain and tension.

This is illustrated later in our parsha with the story of Sodom. What was the terrible sin that caused the city to be destroyed? The Talmud (Sanhedrin 109) says that in Sodom it was illegal to welcome strangers. One Sodomite woman who gave bread to a poor person was punished by publicly being covered with honey and devoured by bees.

Geographically, Sodom is located next to the Dead Sea. In Israel, there are two seas connected by the Jordan River: the Sea of Galilee in the north, and the Dead Sea in the south. Since the Dead Sea is the lowest point on planet Earth (396 meters below sea level), water flows in, but doesn't flow out. This inability to "give" is why it's called the Dead Sea. Likewise, any society that eschews giving is on a path to self-destruction. Practically speaking, how does one become a "giver?" The simple answer: Start giving. Some people say, "I can only give to someone I love." This is incorrect. The Hebrew word for "give" - hav, is the same root as ahava, which means "love." Giving is what leads to love. When I give, I invest a part of myself, making you more precious to me. This is why parents love their children most of all; it is their greatest investment.

A few suggestions: Visit some patients at the local hospital. Invite your friends to a Shabbat dinner. Volunteer to serve meals at a homeless shelter. Emulate G-d and be a giver. Do it with passion and excitement. Do it as if your life depends on it.

Wishing you all a Good Shabbos.