

**Wembley Synagogue****וַיְרָא****Insights from the commentators into the Sedra of Vayera**

וַיְרָא אֱלֹהֵי ה' בְּאֵלְנֵי מַמְרֵה וְהוּא יָשָׁב פְּתַח הָאֹהֶל כְּחֹם הַיּוֹם - *G-d appeared (to Avraham) in the plains of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day (18:1)*

Why did Hashem reveal Himself to Avraham? Rashi quoting the Gemara Bava Metziah 86b explains that Hashem was visiting the sick: - Rabbi Chama bar Chanina said: It was the third day following Avraham's circumcision and Hashem came to inquire after him. The commentary of the Tosfot Yom Tov to Shabbat 9:3 states that the third day following circumcision is when the wound is most painful and the patient most weakened.

The Ohr Hachayim (Rabbi Chayim ben Attar (1696-1743) quotes the Shulchan Aruch which rules in Yoreh Deah 335:1 that friends and relatives are allowed to visit a sick person immediately, whereas others must wait three days.

The Gutnick Chumash adds a note to say that the reason for this is because the immediate presence of anyone but a friend or relative would publicly "declare" the person as being sick, which is not good for his mazal. Even though Hashem is a "relative," so to speak, of every Jew, nevertheless a visit from Hashem is a highly public affair. Therefore, in this respect, Hashem could not be considered a "relative" and consequently He waited before visiting Avraham.

Hashem also caused it to be extremely hot so as to discourage wayfarers seeking Avraham's hospitality. Later, however, seeing Avraham's distress at having no guests, Hashem allowed angels to appear in the guise of men. As soon as Avraham saw them, he asked Hashem to excuse him and he ran to invite the travellers into his house. The Rabbis teach us in the Gemara Shabbat 127a that from this incident we learn that offering hospitality is greater than an encounter with the Divine Presence. But how did Avraham know this? Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon of Shepitivke suggests that when Avraham saw the sun beating down with such intensity that the roads were cleared of travellers, he immediately understood that Hashem had done this to free him from the burdens of hospitality. But seeing that he was in the presence of Hashem, would he not have been exempted from the mitzvah of hospitality anyway? It could only be, Avraham reasoned, that hospitality takes precedence over being in the presence of Hashem, and he would be required to take his leave and look after the needs of his guests. (Source: the Parsha Anthology)

בְּאֵלְנֵי מַמְרֵה - *in the plains of Mamre (18:1)*

Rashi explains that Mamre receives an honourable mention in this sedra because Avraham consulted with him before circumcising himself. The question immediately arises as to why Avraham, the supremely faithful servant of Hashem, deemed it necessary to consult with one of his followers before obeying Hashem's commandment?

The Maharal of Prague (Rabbi Judah Loew, (1525-1609) explains that the thought of disobeying the commandment certainly never crossed Avraham's mind. He was concerned, however, that cynics would accuse him of rashness and lack of forethought. Had Avraham taken a moment to think it through or discuss it with more level-headed people, they would say, he would never have done such a foolhardy thing. The act of circumcision, then, would have been a source of ridicule rather than sanctification of the name of G-d.

To prevent this, Avraham made a public show of careful consultation with others. Now, no one would be able to claim he had rushed headfirst into something he would later regret. Thus, his consultation with Mamre was not to dispel any doubts he might have entertained, but to ensure that his actions bring only honour to the Name of Hashem. Similarly, the Maharal explains, we find that Hashem caused the journey of Avraham and Yitzchak to the Akeidah to take three days (22:4). Why so long? Once again, it was to counteract those who might claim that Hashem's command had so completely thrown Avraham that he had consented to sacrifice his son while not in full control of his faculties. But a three day journey would certainly have allowed him ample opportunity to regain his senses; however, he did not turn back. Clearly then, his readiness to sacrifice his only son was a carefully considered act of utmost faith (Source: the Parsha Anthology)

וַיְרָא וַיָּרָץ לְקָרְאֲתָם - *And he saw and he ran towards them. (18:2)*

Rashi explains that Avraham had to run because when the angels saw that he was sick, they began to go away. Not wanting to lose the opportunity to fulfil the *mitzvah* of *hachnasat orchim* (hospitality), he ran after them. Since the people began to go away, the verse should have read "And he ran *after* them" — instead of, "And he ran *towards* them"?

When one leaves the presence of a prominent person, it is not proper to turn ones back. Instead, even when leaving, one faces the person and walks backwards. When the angels came to Avraham, they noticed that Hashem was also there. Realising that Avraham was very sick, they decided to go away and not bother him. However, since it is improper to turn their backs to Hashem, they walked away backwards. Avraham, noticing this, ran *towards* them to bring them into his home. (Source: Vedibarta Bam)

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein זצ"ל (1895-1986) asks the question why did Avraham run to invite the three guests to his tent even though his weakness following his circumcision exempted him from the mitzvah of receiving guests. Avraham knew that if he were to pray to Hashem to heal him, Hashem would answer his prayer immediately, as He had answered all his previous prayers. However, since the pain of his circumcision was connected with a mitzvah, it meant a lot to him and he was in no hurry for it to end. Nonetheless, he felt it was unfair to leave the guests out in the hot desert simply because he wanted to be exceptionally pious. Therefore, in spite of his pain, he ran out to greet them. (Source: Darash Moshe)

יָקוּחַ נָא מֵעַט מַיִם וְרַחְצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשְׁעוּ תַּחַת הָעֵץ - *Let there now be brought a little water so that you may wash your feet and recline under the tree (18:4)*

In the Gemara referred to above (Bava Metzia 86b) it was taught in the school of Rabbi Yishmael that in reward for three things (that Avraham did, Israel) merited three things.

In reward for חֶמְצָה וְחֶלֶב - *cream and milk (that Avraham offered the three visitors)* they merited the manna.

In reward for עֹמֵד עֲלֵיהֶם - *and he (Avraham) stood over them* (his three visitors), they merited the pillar of cloud. "Stand" – *Omed* and "Cloud" – *Amud* have the same Hebrew root.

In reward for יָקוּחַ נָא מֵעַט מַיִם - *Let there now be brought a little water*—they merited Miriam's well. The Maharsha (Reb Shmuel Eliezer Halevi Eidels 1555 – 1631) says that in the first chapter of Taanit, the Rabbis tell us that the Manna was in the merit of Moshe, the well in the merit of Miriam and the cloud was in the merit of Aharon. This seems to contradict the idea that these blessings were in the merit of Avraham's hospitality. More puzzling is that in the passage above even the Rabbis refer to the well as "Miriam's well." Says the Maharsha - perhaps in the merit of Avraham's hospitality alone they would have received these gifts only for a short time, whereas in the merit of Moshe, Miriam and Aharon they were allowed to retain them for the duration of the forty years in the desert. For this reason, when Aharon died they lost the cloud, when Miriam died, they lost the well and when Moshe died they lost the Manna.

וְאָקֵחָה פֶּת לֶחֶם - *And I will bring a loaf of bread (18:5)*

It is written "And I will bring a loaf of bread" and then it is written "and Avraham ran to the cattle" (18:7) Rabbi Elazar said that from here we learn that the righteous say little and do much. His dictum is actually a saying of Shammai in Pirkei Avot 1:15 "say little and do much." In the case of hospitality it is particularly important because a guest will sometimes decline it altogether rather than put the host to too much trouble. For this reason Avraham initially gave his guests the impression that he would merely share his bread with them. Then, after they accepted the invitation, he prepared for them a feast (Source: Maharsha)

The Akeida in Our Tefilla

As well as taking a central part in the prayers of the *Yamim Noraim*, the *Akeida* is said daily by many at *Shacharit* after *brachot* at the beginning of *Shacharit* and before the passages of the *Korbanot* – which deal with the sacrifices. Abarbanel states "In Hashem's eyes, this passage constitutes the very reason for the existence of the Jewish nation. It has therefore become part of our daily prayers, and must be studied more thoroughly than other passages...."

The *Shulchan Aruch* in *Orach Chaim* 1:5 states that "it is good practice to recite the passage of the Akeida [in one's daily prayers]. The *Mishna Berurah* explains that one should think about what we say here and appreciate the majesty of Hashem. Quoting the Taz (Rabbi David HaLevi Segal, also known as or the *Turei Zahav*, (1586-1667) who was a prominent Polish posek and halakhist), he states that a reason for including this passage in the prayers is to recall daily the merits of the Patriarchs who were tested so harshly and responded so remarkably (Source: A Close Look at The Siddur)

Shabbat Shalom!



Shabbat starts 4.04pm



Shabbat ends: 5.07pm