

In this week's *Parashah*, Avraham Avinu sends his servant to Charan to find a wife for Yitzchak. Avraham warns his servant (24:6), "Beware not to return my son to there." *Midrash Rabbah* teaches that Yitzchak was considered to be an *Olah Temimah* / a perfect sacrificial offering as a result of having been offered wholeheartedly at the *Akeidah*. Just as an *Olah* may not be removed from the *Bet Hamikdash*, so Yitzchak may not leave *Eretz Yisrael*.

R' Nosson Yehuda Leib Mintzberg z"l (1943-2018; rabbi and *Rosh Yeshiva* in Yerushalayim and Bet Shemesh, Israel) writes: From this *Midrash*, which equates Yitzchak's leaving *Eretz Yisrael* with taking a *Korban* out of the *Bet Hamikdash*, we learn something about the *Kedushah* / holiness of *Eretz Yisrael*. Part of serving *Hashem* is stationing appropriate servants in His "House" and His "Courtyard." The *Kohen Gadol*, for example, is commanded (*Vayikra* 21:12), "He shall not leave the *Mikdash* / Sanctuary." Likewise, it is *Hashem's* Will that His servants, the residents of *Eretz Yisrael*, not leave that Land ("Hashem's Courtyard") except under specific conditions, such as to perform a *Mitzvah*. But Yitzchak, who had the status of an *Olah Temimah*, could not leave even for such reasons.

On the level of *Peshat*, R' Mintzberg adds, there is another reason why Yitzchak could not leave *Eretz Yisrael*. He explains: Avraham began the process of acquiring *Eretz Yisrael* by traveling throughout the Land. Yitzchak continued the acquisition process, but in a different way--residing in and using the Land (see *Bereishit* 26:2, 12). If Yitzchak would appear to abandon the Land, it would undo his acquisition. On the other hand, by remaining in *Eretz Yisrael* through circumstances in which others might leave it--for example, during a famine (26:1-2), Yitzchak strengthened his and his descendants' hold on the Land. (*Ben Melech Al Ha'Torah*)

Shabbat

R' Aharon Roth z"l (1894-1947; *Shomer Emunim Rebbe* in Hungary and Yerushalayim) relates a parable:

A man needed to travel from home--whether it was because he sinned against the king and was exiled, because he was appointed by the king as an ambassador, or for some other reason. He travels far from his family and he dwells alone, becoming increasingly lonely. From time-to-time, he experiences moments of joy--perhaps, for example, when he sees his mission succeeding--but that joy pales in comparison to the happiness he would have had sitting at home with his wife and children. With great anticipation and longing, he awaits the day when his exile or his ambassadorial term will end and he will be able to return home.

One day, he looks up and sees someone familiar coming toward him. As the new arrival approaches, the exile realizes that the person is a close friend from back home. Imagine the joy! And, how much greater would the joy be if the new arrival is actually a relative!

The new arrival explains that the king has sent him to keep our traveler company and to lessen his loneliness. When our traveler hears this, he is filled with gratitude for the king's compassion--in particular, if he is lonely because he was exiled for committing a serious offense against the king.

R' Roth explains to what the parable refers: Our souls come from very lofty places in Heaven, and they are sent far away from their "roots"--either as ambassadors, to accomplish specific missions in this world, or as exiles, to repair some damage that they committed in their prior existence. Either way, a soul's "homesickness" while it is in this world is immense.

On the Holy *Shabbat*, a "visitor" is sent from Heaven to keep the lonely soul company. That "visitor" is the *Neshamah Yeteirah* / the "extra soul." Each Jew receives a *Neshamah Yeteirah* from his "hometown," so-to-speak--i.e., each person's *Neshamah Yeteirah* comes from the same unique spiritual "root" as his own *Neshamah*, so that it will be an appropriate companion for his or her soul. For this reason, the *Neshamah Yeteirah* brings a person's soul great happiness on *Shabbat*. (*Shulchan Ha'tahor* p.257)

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“Yitzchak went out to supplicate in the field towards evening . . .” (24:63)

The *Gemara* (*Berachot* 26b) teaches: Yitzchak Avinu established the afternoon prayer, *Mincha*.

R' Yeshayah Halevi Horowitz z"l (the *Shelah Hakadosh*; rabbi of Prague and Yerushalayim; died 1630) asks: “*Mincha*” is the name of the meal offering that accompanied most sacrifices in the *Bet Hamikdash*, including the *Korban Tamid* that was brought every morning. Why, then, was this name chosen specifically for the afternoon prayer, the one Yitzchak established?

He answers: As noted, most sacrifices include a *Mincha*. Nevertheless, when Yitzchak was offered as a sacrifice, and when a ram was later brought in his place, no *Mincha* was offered. Yitzchak established the afternoon prayer as a substitute for that “missing” offering, and therefore we call it “*Mincha*.”

Why indeed was no *Mincha* offered at *Akeidat Yitzchak*? The *Shelah* explains: One of the reasons *Hashem* told Avraham to sacrifice his son was the Prosecuting Angel’s complaint that Avraham offered food to angels (at the beginning of last week’s *Parashah*), thus appearing to offer a sacrifice to a Heavenly being other than *Hashem*. *Hashem* replied to the Prosecuting Angel, “You’ll see! He will even offer his son to Me if I demand it.” But, since Avraham did not feed the angels bread (see *Bereishit* 18:8), his offering of Yitzchak did not need to include bread either. (*Shnei Luchot Ha’brit: Vayera*)

“She said to the servant, ‘Who is that man walking in the field toward us?’ And the servant said, ‘He is my master’.” (24:65)

Throughout the *Parashah*, the servant, Eliezer, refers to Avraham as his master. When did Yitzchak become the servant’s master?

R' Michel Zilber *shlita* (*Rosh Yeshiva* of the *Zvhill yeshiva* in Yerushalayim) answers: *Rashi* (*Bereishit* 24:36) writes that Eliezer showed Rivka’s family a deed giving all of Avraham’s property to Yitzchak. Presumably, that deed was conditioned on the success of Eliezer’s mission. Therefore, now, when Eliezer returned with a bride for Yitzchak, Avraham’s property--including his servant Eliezer--became Yitzchak’s. (*Tipah Min Ha’yam*)

“The servant told Yitzchak all the things he had done.” (24:66)

Rashi z"l comments: The servant (Eliezer) reported to Yitzchak the miracles that had been done for him--that the way shortened miraculously (literally, “that the earth shrank for him”)--and that Rivka was caused to come to the well in response to his prayer.” [Until here from *Rashi*]

Rabbi Yonason Sacks *shlita* (*Rosh Ha’yeshiva* of Beis Medrash L’Talmud-Lander College) observes that the only thing Eliezer did was pray; everything else happened miraculously. Nevertheless, because the miracles resulted from Eliezer’s prayers, the Torah gives him credit for everything that occurred--“all the things he had done.”

(*Shiur* at Yeshivat Kerem B’Yavneh, 15 *Cheshvan* 5784)

“Sarah’s lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years--the years of Sarah’s life.” (23:1)

Rashi z"l comments: “The word ‘years’ is repeated to indicate that they were all equally good.” [Until here from *Rashi*]

R' Yitzchak Klein z"l *Hy”d* (rabbi of Kosice, Slovakia; killed in the Holocaust) writes: Our Matriarch Sarah experienced many ups and downs in her life, and she knew times of suffering. Nevertheless, all of her days were equally good. How so?

He explains: The *Gemara* (*Berachot* 57b) relates about Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa: “*Hashem* says, “The entire world is sustained in the merit of My son Chanina, and My son Chanina is satisfied with a measure of carobs from *Erev Shabbat* to *Erev Shabbat*.” Because a *Tzaddik* is satisfied with little and he does not take more from this world than is necessary to sustain himself, his merit remains for others, who are then sustained in the merit of the *Tzaddik’s Mitzvot*. This is the meaning of the verse (*Mishlei* 13:25), “A righteous person eats to satisfy his soul, and the stomach of the wicked will lack.” If the *Tzaddik* eats to satisfy all his desires, then the wicked will go hungry, for no merit will remain to sustain them.

In the same vein, Sarah considered all of her days to be equally good, despite what we would view as negative experiences, because she knew that her suffering would provide merit to those who had no merit of their own, and her merit would protect them. Therefore, in connection with our verse, a *Midrash* cites the verse (*Tehilim* 37:18), “*Hashem* knows the days of the perfect”--*i.e.*, *Hashem* loves the days of the perfect, for all their days are equal. “Good” and “bad” are considered good because, when *Tzaddikim* forego living off of, and using up, their own merits, those merits remain as an inheritance for others. (*Birkat Avraham*)

“Avraham was old, Ba ba’yamim / coming along in days, and Hashem blessed Avraham Ba’kol / with everything.” (24:1)

R' Moshe Yirmiyahu Narol Hakohen z"l (rabbi in Narol, Poland and Metz, France; died 1659) writes: *Rashi* (*Bereishit* 18:19) states that, if one leaves behind a righteous son, it is as if he does not die. Thus, Avraham is *Ba* / coming along *ba’yamim* / with two--the *Gematria* of the letter *Bet* is two--sets of days, *i.e.*, two lives. Why? Because “*Hashem* blessed Avraham *Ba’kol*”--the *Gematria* of “*Ba’kol*” equals the *Gematria* of “*Ben*” / “a son.”

R' Moshe Yirmiyahu writes further: Our Sages teach that a person should repent one day before he dies--which means repenting daily, since one never knows when he will die. And, we read (*Mishlei* 10:27), “Fear of *Hashem* will add to one’s days.” It follows that repenting daily can lengthen a person’s life. Therefore, Avraham, who surely engaged in this practice, viewed every day as a new gift--he came along “in days.” (*Birkat Tov*)