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Presents:

Shabbos INSPIRE.

MONTHLY PARSHA SHEET

And Hashem Appeared To Him

By Rabbi Moshe Zionce

"And Hashem appeared to him (Avraham) in the plains of Mamre as he was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day. He lifted his eyes and saw: And behold, there were three men ... so he ran toward them..." (וירא יח: א,ב)

The gemara explains that it is commendable that Avraham Avinu left Hashem in order to attend to the travelers: "Hospitality to wayfarers is greater than receiving the Divine Presence." (שבועות לה, שבת קכז).

It still seems virtually inconceivable that Avraham Avinu would even consider putting his encounter with the Creator of the world "on hold" in order to attend to the needs of a man of flesh and blood?! There is a most beautiful Chasam Sofer that offers a glimpse into the exceptional character and rationale of Avraham Avinu.

The Chasam Sofer, in his introduction to Sheilos and Teshuvos on Yorah Deah, elucidates a subsequent passuk in the parsha, "And Hashem said, Shall I conceal from Avraham that which I intend to do?" (וירא יח: יז)

Rashi comments that this passuk is in reference to the destruction of S'dom. Hashem felt it would be unbecoming of Him to destroy S'dom without Avraham's knowledge. Therefore, Hashem would inform him of the imminent decree.

The Chasam Sofer asks: How is it possible that a Navi the likes of Avraham Avinu did not have the prophetic, intuitive foreknowledge of such a major event that was to befall humanity? Even prophets such as Yeshaya, Yermiya and Yechezkel would have had the knowledge of such an occurrence in their time.

Incredibly, he suggests that Avraham Avinu did not reach the level of prophecy of even these much later Nevi'im! How is this possible? The Chasam Sofer answers: Avraham Avinu was so deeply engrossed in the act of teaching and bringing others תחת כנפי השכינה - under the wings of the Shechina, he did not have adequate time to direct his thoughts and to develop into a greater prophet. Hence, because Avraham was engaged in doing Hashem's will, he did not allow himself the privilege of reaching the spiritual heights needed to receive such prophecy.

Masterfully, the Chasam Sofer explains that Hashem, who knows what is deep in our hearts, knew (the heart of) Avraham. Although Avraham Avinu did not achieve this exalted level of prophecy, Hashem would not conceal the impending destruction of S'dom from him. It is because Avraham sacrificed his own spiritual level for the glory of Hashem, that Hashem would now not allow him to lose out!

continued on back >

Soldiers of Hashem

By Gavriel Horan

No one would have ever imagined that a group of ten Israeli soldiers, Belzer Chassidim, and families from the Five Towns would hit it off so well. The truth was that it was a recipe for success beyond everyone's wildest dreams! It was a smashing success! The Shabbaton in Lawrence for an IDF unit traveling throughout the U.S. to raise funds was joined by the "Travelling Chassidim" from Monsey. Chassidim wore the soldier's green berets and the soldiers wore streimels while everyone danced and sang together for hours on end. Everyone present felt the tangible achdus in the air. For most of the soldiers, it was the very first time they had a positive experience with Shabbos and Chareidim. "I never knew Shabbat k'halacha could be so much fun," one soldier said.

The soldiers, however, weren't the only ones meeting a new segment of Jewish society that day. For six year old Brucha Devorah, it was the first time she had ever consciously encountered non-frum Jews. She couldn't quite understand what they were all about.



"Why don't they keep Shabbos?" she asked her grandmother, Mrs. Adina Greene.

"That's a good question," her grandmother responded good-naturedly. "I also don't know the answer. After Shabbos, let's go ask them together."

Motzei Shabbos, the community gathered in the home of the soldiers' hosts for another chance to solidify the wonderful relationships that were started over Shabbos. The uniformed soldiers were mingling with the crowd of visitors, joyful smiles upon their faces, clearly still elevated from the Shabbos experience. Mrs. Greene and her granddaughter noticed one huge, imposing looking soldier who was sitting on the side, apart from the others. As they approached him, it became evident that he was the commander of the unit.

"Shavua Tov!" she greeted him, introducing herself. "Can we ask you a question?"

"Sababa," he said with slight hesitation in his voice. "Why not?"

Mrs. Greene waited patiently while little Brucha Devorah got up the courage to ask her question to the giant soldier. Finally, she squeaked out the words in a whisper that was barely audible while Mrs. Greene acted as interpreter: "If you're Jewish and live in Israel, why don't you keep Shabbos?"

The soldier seemed a little surprised by the question. "Let me explain, little girl," he said, bending down to get a little closer. "In the Jewish nation there are many different types of Jews. Some learn Torah and keep Shabbat. Others work to build up the state of Israel, and others fight in the army to protect our people and ensure that there will always be a Jewish homeland. Do you understand?"

Brucha Devorah looked back up at him with her big, innocent, brown eyes and shook her head no.

continued on back >

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► continued from front

The Chasam Sofer continues to speak directly to each of us: Should we, servants of Hashem, who desire to cleave to Him, diminish our Torah learning and affect the perfection of our soul in order to aid in the spiritual development of a fellow Jew? He answers: Do we think it is beyond Hashem's capabilities to compensate us for that which was lost while sacrificing for His Glory? Therefore, we must do what we are obligated to do - to teach Torah to all Jews and Hashem will enable us to accomplish more on a personal level than we thought possible. "Do His will as if it were your will, in order that He will do your will as if it were His will."

We were created to do Hashem's will and bring Hashem's children close. By doing so, we can never lose out.

This majestic approach speaks deeply to the neshama of every Jew. It is all too easy to get caught up in life in general or even in the details of a mitzvah and to lose sight of the big picture: We are here to bring **כבוד שמים** - Hashem's glory. Whenever this is not achieved, something will remain lacking. However, if we sacrifice for **כבוד שמים**, the lack will never be in us. We were created to do Hashem's will and bring Hashem's children close. By doing so, we can never lose out.

Similarly, I have heard a remarkable idea that both Rav Aharon Kotler, **זצ"ל**, and the Bobover Rebbe, R' Shlomo Halberstam, **זצ"ל**, echoed. "If you take care of Hashem's children, Hashem will take care of yours."

With all that was said above, we can attempt an answer to a question for which the answer has always eluded me. The first bracha of the Shemoneh Esrei is the bracha of the Avos - Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. However, the bracha ends with simply **"מגן אברהם"** - "the shield of Avraham" (excluding the two other Patriarchs). Why was the bracha formulated in this way? It was Avraham who made the deepest sacrifice for Hashem's children - he aided all even at the expense of his own spiritual level. Therefore, it is explicitly through him that compassion is evoked and eternal protection - a "shield" - is granted for his children in all subsequent generations.

We live in a time when nine out of ten Jews do not have a meaningful relationship with their Father in heaven. They are our neighbors, co-workers and relatives. We pass them in the street and we stand idly beside them in line. What would Avraham Avinu do? Would he hesitate for one moment? They are Hashem's children. Each neshama you touch enables that neshama to experience an eternal bond with its Father in Heaven and eternal merit is achieved for you and your family. Today, when even the best families pray for great **סייטא דשמיא** in parenting we have a guarantee that if we take care of Hashem's children, He will take care of ours. Each one of us can make all the difference to a fellow Jew, to our family and to Hashem! If we act for Hashem's honor we can only gain. Together we can change the face of Klal Yisroel and together we can restore Kavod Shamayim. **PI**

Good Shabbos,
Rabbi Moshe Zionce
Director, Project Inspire Toronto

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He tried again: "You see, in just over 60 years, we built up Israel into a fully advanced and sophisticated modern country from nothing. In order to keep the state advancing so that we can keep up with the rest of the world, we cannot afford to take off of work for a second. Furthermore, we are surrounded on three sides by enemy nations many times greater than us who seek to run us into the water. Although Shabbat here was truly a beautiful experience, it has no place in the life of a soldier. I have to be out there risking my life to defend us from enemy fire day and night. Who else is going to do it? That's why I don't keep Shabbat. Now do you understand?" he asked the little girl with a smile on his face, quite satisfied with his answer.

She smiled back at the gigantic man, but still shook her head no.

He started to become slightly frustrated: "Listen, little girl, it's quite simple. I've seen more friends than I can count on my fingers, die before my very eyes. After that, there's no way I could believe in G-d. That's it. That's why I don't keep Shabbat! Now do you understand?"

Although Brucha Devorah finally nodded her little head in silent affirmation, it was Mrs. Greene's turn to ask a question: "Now I don't understand," she said firmly. "I can't begin to understand the pain you have been through seeing what you have seen. We all owe you a huge debt of gratitude for risking your life to defend the Jewish people. That's very noble and beautiful of you. But something else I don't understand is if you don't believe in G-d, why are you doing it at all? What's the point of the defending the Jewish people if there's no G-d? What are you fighting for?"

He drew a blank. He had never actually asked himself what the purpose of it all was before.

"I'm fighting so that my mother can live in peace," he finally with slight resignation.

"How can you say you don't believe in G-d, then?" Mrs. Greene asked boldly. "Every morning, at 8:30, a group of women get together in our community to say amen to each others bruchos. We also pray for the sick people amongst the Jewish nation, as well as for the safety of the Israeli soldiers. If something were to happen to you out there in the line of duty one day, G-d forbid, who do you think your mother would pray to?"

He stopped dead in his tracks as if a train had hit him. He took a step back and then retreated to a nearby lounge chair, burying his head in his hands in deep contemplation. When he stood up to face Mrs. Greene again, he was a different person. Suddenly, this huge ox of a man appeared smaller, more humble. He turned to her with tears in his eyes.

"You're 100 percent right," he said. "I never thought of it that way before."

He then proceeded to hand her a medallion with the insignia of his platoon engraved in it along with the words: "With compliments, the commander of C.T.S."—the elite counter terrorism unit of the IDF.

"I want you to have this," he said. "I have three of them to give out to our greatest supporters here in America. I gave one to someone in Chicago and another to someone in New York. I want you to have this last one. Take my cell phone number. When you come to Israel, please call me. I really want to continue to speak to you about this."

A short time later Mrs. Greene called him up in Israel and asked him if he would go to her friend's house for Shabbos in Jerusalem. "Yes," he said. "It would be my greatest pleasure."

Before hanging up the phone he added: "I want you to know that every day at 2:30 pm Israel-time, I look at my watch and feel a little safer, knowing that you and your friends are praying for me."

It's amazing how huge barriers can come down with just a little dialogue. What appear to be enemy lines separating us from one another is really just an illusion, waiting to be dissolved by soldiers in Hashem's army. **PI**

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