



# TorahActionLife

## COMMUNITY PARASHA SHEET

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Lirefua Yitschak Ben Mazal Douek  
Hakohen Betoch Shaar Cholei Yisrael

### VAYEIRA

17<sup>th</sup> CHESHVAN 5777

Shabbat begins: 15:52

Shabbat ends: 16:57



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL  
DIRECTOR, TAL

Thanks To Hashem

Thanking G-d at every stage in your life is important.

In the olden days the Mizbeach (altar) represented the place in which a person could offer up thanks to Hashem.

At the end of this week's Parsha, the Torah tells us that Avraham built a Mizbeach upon which to sacrifice his son, Yitzchak. This is the fourth Mizbeach built by Avraham. In Parshat Lech Lecha, he builds one at his first stop in Eretz Yisrael, Shchem, where HaKadosh Baruch Hu informs him that his descendants would inherit the land. He builds a second one between Bet El and Ay. He builds his third Mizbeach in Chevron, after separating from Lot, when Hashem tells him, "Kum hithalech ba'aretz - Go walk in the land...for to you I shall give it" (Bereishit 13:18).

The second Mizbeach, built between Bet El and Ay, is significant in that it is the only Mizbeach to which Avraham Avinu returns. Why is it that he decides to return to this Mizbeach and what is the significance in such a return? Let us focus on another episode in this week's Parsha that will enhance our understanding of the situation.



The people of Sodom and Gemora were very wicked and Hashem wished to destroy them. First He let Avraham know about this.

Avraham ran to their defence and started to pray vehemently to Hashem to have mercy on the people. He asked that if there were to be found 50 Tsadikim in the place then Hashem should have mercy and not destroy. Hashem agreed.

Avraham saw that there were not 50 Tsadikim but still wished to ask Hashem further. He introduced his next prayer with the famous words "I am but dust and ash". His prayer was successful and had Hashem found ten (the eventual number that Avraham managed to achieve) Tsadikim then Hashem would not have destroyed the area.

What a powerful prayer, what did Avraham mean by dust and ash?

Earth as a substance has very little significance; it is simply dust of the ground. But if one takes a seed and plants it in the earth, the earth nurtures the seed and enables it to grow into a beautiful plant or a tree. Thus, we might say that earth has little significance in the past, but great *potential* in the future.

Ashes are the opposite. In the future, they are useless. But if we were to examine the ashes' role in the past, we would likely find that they had at one point served an important function, perhaps warming a house, or perhaps they came from a vessel that had been used for many years and had finally worn down.

Avraham felt that he encompassed the negative qualities of both dust and ashes - he was like dust in the past, and like ashes in the future.

When approaching Hashem with a request, he understood that he was nothing, he deserved nothing, and that whatever the Creator wishes will be.

That is why his prayer was so powerful and effective!



### Living with Mitzvos

1. Avrohom gives the visiting Angels milk and meat. How did they eat this?
2. Why did Avrohom believe more than Soro about the tidings of a son and only she laughed and was rebuked?
3. How could the great Soro deny the claim that she had laughed at the tidings?
4. Avrohom was in tremendous pain recovering from his operation of bris mila. Why did he not simply close his house to guests for a few days until he was fully recovered and then resume his hospitality?
5. How many cities were allied and partners to Sedom and how many of them were destroyed?
6. Why is it called "Akeida"? What does this mean?
7. How old was Yitzchok by the Akeida?

Answers On Page 3

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In fact the Midrash (Bamidbar Rabah 9:15) relates that Hashem was so impressed so to speak, that He told Avraham, "Because you said, 'I am but dust and ash,' I promise you that your children will be given two great Mitzvot which are performed with dust and ashes. The ashes of the Parah Adumah (the red heifer, the ashes of which were sprinkled upon one who had become defiled through contact with a corpse), and the dust of the Sotah (the wayward wife, who is brought to the Temple and is given to drink a mixture consisting of water, earth (dust), and the letters of Hashem's name dissolved in the water)."

The Dubno Maggid, explains the above Midrash by means of a parable. Once there was a king who made a very large and exclusive banquet. Only the most important and influential people were invited. One of the invitees was a very special man, a wise and scholarly individual, who was highly distinguished among his peers. As expected, the king had set aside a seat for this special guest at the head table.

This guest, however, was also a very modest and unassuming person. When he

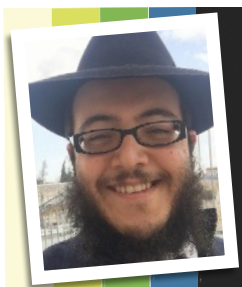
arrived, he absolutely refused to be seated anywhere near the head table. Instead, he chose for himself a simple place towards the back of the banquet hall. The king, seeing what had happened, repeatedly tried to get his distinguished guest to take his place at the head table. But to no avail. He absolutely refused to sit anywhere other than at his humble table in the back. Then the king had an idea. He made his plan known to the others seated at the head table, and they immediately began implementing it. One by one they left their places at the head table, and found themselves a seat at the same table where the humble but distinguished guest was seated. His table had now become the "head table".

The same was true with Avraham. In his humility, he truly felt himself to be dust (hence its use in the mitzvah of Sotah, which comes to clarify something that has occurred in the past - i.e. whether the wife strayed from her husband or not) and ash (hence its use for the mitzvah of Parah Adumah, whose ashes are used in the future to purify one who has become defiled). "If you insist on being dust and ash," said Hashem, "then I will take dust

and ash and create from them beautiful Mitzvot, which will bring honour to you."

When Avraham returned from his short stay in Egypt, the Pasuk relates (13:2) that he was heavily laden with cattle, silver and gold. He had amassed great wealth. Yet he was afraid that this great wealth would steer him off the path. He was worried that it would affect his character, and people might think that he has now left the path of the righteous in order to follow the path of worldly pursuits. Thus the first thing he did was to go back to the place he had originally offered up an offering between Bet El and Ay, and again make an offering. This symbolised that just as he had gone down to Egypt as a righteous man, so too he had come up righteous and that he still acknowledged everything was from Hashem.

Avraham understood all his life that he was but dust and ashes, any wealth amassed was considered to him to be Kaved – heavy. Of course it was welcome, and he would use it for the best, but that was not the main purpose in life. He constantly held his humility and thus merited such a close relationship with Hashem.



**RABBI AMOS AZIZOFF**  
**PARASHAT VAYEIRA**

This week's Torah reading relates that Abraham established an inn for guests, and there he "called upon the name of the eternal G-d." Our Rabbis interpret this phrase, explaining that the intent is not that only Abraham himself called to G-d, but that he motivated others to proclaim G-dliness as well.

What did he do? He established his tent at a crossroads in the desert and generously provided food and drink to wayfarers. After they completed their meal, he asked them to bless "the One who provided you with food and drink."

When the guests began to bless him, Abraham told them: "Was it I who provided

you with food? Bless He who spoke and brought the world into being." By providing people with their physical needs, he made them conscious of the spiritual reality.

The Hebrew term translated as "the eternal G-d" - *kail olam* - has also attracted the attention of the commentaries. *Kail olam* literally means "G-d of the world" i.e. there is a G-d and there is a world, and even the world recognizes that G-d is Almighty and in control.

But *kail olam* also represents a different and deeper insight. There is no difference between G-d and the world; *everything* is an expression of G-dliness. This is the intent of the phrase "G-d is one" that we recite in the *Shema* prayer: not only is there only one G-d, but everything in the world is at one with Him.

This is not only an abstract concept. It affects a person's fundamental approach to his life. When he sees G-d as "G-d of the world," he understands that he has obligations to Him. After all, if G-d is the Ruler of the world, a person has to pay his dues.

But that, he thinks, is all he is obligated to do. In the rest of his affairs, his life is his own. It's like paying taxes. You have to

give the government a percentage of your income, but afterwards you can spend the remainder of your money however you like. Similarly, in a spiritual sense, such a person recognizes that he owes something to G-d, but his life is primarily his own; he can do with it whatever he wants.

When we appreciate the world as one with G-d, by contrast, our entire relationship with Him changes. Religion is not merely going to the synagogue or carrying out a certain body of laws, but an all-encompassing experience, affecting every element of our lives.

Every situation in which we are found, every person whom we meet gives us an opportunity to advance in our knowledge of G-d and our connection to Him.

This is the heritage that Abraham gave to his descendants - to spread the awareness that we are living in His world, that our lives are not intended merely to provide ourselves with a little bit of enjoyment and satisfaction, but are instead mediums to make His presence known to others.

May we all merit that in the year 5777 we do not merely count our days but instead make every day count!!



## Kli Yakar

Ephraim son of Aaron was born in the city of Luntschitz in what is today central Poland around the year 1550. He studied under the famed Maharshah (Rabbi Shlomo Luria) and became Rabbi of the city of Lvov where he served for 25 years.

From an early age he was recognized as a star orator and was renowned for his fiery sermons. In 1601, Rabbi Ephraim became deathly ill. During the course of his illness he added the name Shlomo to his name and thereafter signed his name Shlomo Ephraim. He also vowed that if he survived his illness he would compose a commentary to the Pentateuch.

Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim survived his illness and the very next year wrote and published his commentary, named Kli Yakar. The commentary became immediately popular throughout the Jewish world and was his most famous publication, to the point, as with many other great Rabbis, that he is now known simply as the Kli Yakar. More than 400 years later, the Kli Yakar remains popular and is printed alongside the commentary of Rashi and others in many Chumashim.

The year after the Kli Yakar's publication, he was appointed Chief Rabbi of the great city of Prague, where he also served as Rosh Yeshiva and the Head of the Beit Din. Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim passed away in 1619. His son and other descendants followed in his footsteps, also holding the esteemed position of Chief Rabbi of Prague. Amongst his most famous students was Rabbi Yom Tov Lipman Heller, also known as Tosfos Yom Tov.

## Rav Kook

Rav Kook thought that everything a Jew does should be holy. When he learned Torah he tried to speak only Hebrew, the Lashon Hakodesh, since it was the language of the Torah and davening. He

tried to keep his thoughts pure also. He believed that only with Torah thoughts would he be able to wear his tallis and tefilin all day long.

At first, he wanted to have regular job so that he could make money and have time to learn Torah, but the Chofetz Chaim told him to become a rabbi in Europe. Then he fulfilled the dream of his childhood and moved to Eretz Yisrael. Eventually he became the first

chief rabbi of Eretz Yisrael. Rav Kook loved all Jews. He would travel to all the towns and villages in Eretz Yisrael, talking to the people to help them see the beauty of Torah and Mitzvot. He was very concerned for the farmers who worked very hard.

He wrote letters to Jews all over the world urging them to buy their esrogim for Sukkos from the Jewish farmers in Eretz Yisrael. Rav Kook taught us an important lesson. We should always try to help another Jew even when we do a mitzvah for Hashem. If we buy our esrog from a Jewish farmer, we fulfill our mitzvah of Lulav and Esrog and we fulfill the mitzvah of helping another Jew earn a living.

## Living with Mitzvos

1. Tosfos says that they ate them together. The Roikayach says that first they had the milk and only subsequently ate the meat. The Malbim says that the meat was created by Avrohom with the Sefer Yetzira and therefore was not considered real meat and could thus be eaten with milk.
2. The Ramban says that Avrohom did not tell her previously what Hashem had told him and she just heard it from these people who looked like Arabs and therefore she was skeptical.
3. The Ohr Hachaim points out that the possuk does not say she said words of denial. Rather it means that she made actions that could be interpreted as denial.
4. We see an amazing thing about Avrohom. It is true that if people are doing chesed and then have to temporarily stop for some reason then they can. Avrohom however was not looking for excuses. His whole essence was to perform chesed, kindness, and therefore even when in such pain his essence drove him to continue despite his discomfiture!
5. The five kings mentioned in Parshas Lech Lecha (Chapter 14) were the five kings of the cities allied and partners of Sedom. The other four were: Amora, Adma, Tzvoyim and Tzoar. They were all slated to be destroyed but in the end due to Lot's plea, (19:19-22), Tzoar was saved and only the other four were destroyed.
6. "Akedah" means "tied". It refers to a special tying of hand and feet together as was done to Yitzchok (See Gemora Shabbos 54a).
7. Yitzchok was 37 years old by the Akeida. Rabbeinu Bechai (Chayei Sara, 23:1) sees an allusion to this in the possuk that " " that has the gematria of 37 that were the number of main years of Sora when she had Yitzchok. (He was born to her when she was 90 and she died when she was 127.)

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