

# THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT VAYERA

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



**RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL**  
*TAL Founder & Director*

## THE PROFOUND PURPOSE OF PARENTHOOD

A student approached me last week with a great question.

Modern studies seem to show that having children lead to unhappiness.

In one study, psychologist Daniel Kahneman and his colleagues asked about 900 employed women to report, at the end of each day, each one of their activities and how happy they were when they did them. They recalled being with their children as less enjoyable than many other activities, such as watching TV, shopping, or preparing food.

After all, having children, particularly when they are young, involves financial struggle, sleep deprivation, and stress. For mothers, there is also in many cases the physical strain of pregnancy. And children can turn a cheerful and relationship into a zero-sum battle over who gets to sleep and work and who does not. Some say that children provoke a couple's most frequent arguments, more than money, more than work and more than in-laws!

And with that introduction my student asked; "So why would you like to have kids?"

What a great question! I would like to share part of my answer with you as its very relevant to our Parasha.

Hashem has commanded us to have children and in fact it is the first command in the Torah. Certainly, culture and tradition play a significant role in having children.

In addition, our neighbours, our friends, and our loved ones may be having children, and we might feel the urge to do the same. It is almost as if a whisper from the collective consciousness compels us to join in. But,

for us Jews, the main reason must always be performing the Will of our Creator as what energises us to have children.

But beyond these reasons there is a deeper, more profound truth that lies in the heart of our Parsha, a truth that resonates within each of us.

In this week's Torah portion, we encounter three powerful insights into the realm of parenting.

First, let us consider Lot's response when he was visited by angelic guests and faced the daunting task of protecting them from a hostile mob outside. In a stunning choice, he offers his own daughters as a shield for his guests' safety. This act may seem perplexing, even warped, as we ponder who is more important – the angels or Lot's daughters? It challenges us to contemplate our own lives. How often do we toil and invest so that our children may receive the best education, only to find ourselves too busy to spend quality time with them? Is there a point to striving for success if we cannot relish the precious moments with our children? Perhaps the ladies in Daniel Kahneman's study were not happy as they had their priorities wrong.

Secondly, we turn to Hagar, who when faced with starvation and lack of water places Yishmael "kimtachave keshet," as far away as a bowshot (21:16). This is an interesting way of measuring a distance. Why does the Torah measure the distance with such a space?

Some Sages say it was out of fear that her son Yishmael might decide to harm her. Leaving him at this distance away ensured that she was safe.

Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, however, suggests a different perspective. Hagar's egoism becomes apparent when her child's fortune takes a downturn. She separates



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The profound purpose of Parenthood  
By Rabbi Jonathan Tawil



**DVAR TORAH**  
Parshat Vayera  
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**DVAR TORAH**  
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him as far as possible, avoiding the pain of watching her child suffer.

In stark contrast, we see this week's Haftorah, where the Shunamite woman clings to her son even in his last moments and never loses hope, turning to the prophet Elisha to infuse Heavenly assistance. The profound lesson is evident: when a child becomes unwell, our duty is to embrace them closely, offering comfort and unwavering care. As adults, we must exhibit strength and compassion, placing the well-being of the child at the forefront, even when faced with our own pain, rather than retreating from the situation.

Lastly, we delve into the story of Sarah, who hosts a grand celebration, on the day Yitzchak is weaned. The critics of the day ridiculed Sarah saying that it couldn't be that this child was really hers. They said she must have taken the child from the market and pretended it was hers.

Sarah proceeded to host a monumental feast at which not only was she able to breastfeed her son Yitzchak but was also able to feed everyone's children. When they saw this there was nothing to deny. They all realised that a massive miracle had

occurred and concurred that Yitzchak was in fact her son.

The Sages ask, why did Sarah wait until now to demonstrate this miracle? Why didn't she show everyone as soon as Yitzchak was born, why wait until she finished weaning him to show her capabilities?

The answer lies in her priority to nurture her son first. She wanted to concentrate on his education before spreading the miracle to others. Her message is clear: our own children are paramount, and we must focus on their growth before extending our efforts to others.

These three teachings are indispensable for every parent. But there is something deeper; throughout these narratives, we discover a shared theme – the core principle of selflessness.

All the reasons for having children we mentioned earlier might be correct, but an essential reason of why we as Jews bring children into the world is to give. The entire universe was created for this purpose, "Olam chesed yibane," and we feel this truth deep within our souls.

When Adam Harishon was created,

Hashem declared, "It is not good for man to be alone." Yet we know that Adam was not alone. He had angels that were serving him delicacies and was treated like a king. How can we say he was alone?

Our Sages explain that a person who is solely a taker is "alone"! It was only when Hashem created Chava, a partner, that man could become a giver. A giver is happy and content, while a taker remains lonely.

Having children allows us to nurture and impart values, fostering the next generation with the best of our knowledge and wisdom. It is through this act of giving that we find the true meaning and purpose of parenthood.

On a macro level this is who we are. We are givers, and there is no nation like Am Yisrael. Our purpose in bringing new life into this world is to give, to nurture, and to ensure a brighter future. In our daily lives, we must remember that our children, our families, and our communities depend on us to be the givers they need. With this understanding, we can embrace the universal and sacred mission of parenthood, secure in the knowledge that we are fulfilling our divine purpose.



**RABBI DAVID BAADANI**  
*Director - TAL Chazanut Program*

## PARSHAT VAYERA

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים אֶל-אַבְרָהָם... כֹּל אֲשֶׁר תֹּאמַר אֵלַי  
שָׂרָה שְׁמַע בְּקוֹלָהּ  
'And G-d said to Abraham... whatever  
Sarah tells you, do as she says'.

When Sarah sees the bad influence of Ishmael on Isaac, she asks Abraham, 'cast out that slave-woman and her son'. Abraham didn't like the idea of sending his son away, but then השם told him. Whatever Sarah tells you, not only this time, but every time, whatever she tells you, do as she says.

We need to understand that all the 'tales' brought to us in the Torah are not just stories, they were chosen by G-d for all the generations so that we can learn from them how we should behave, act and respond to situations we are faced with in our lives. So, what does the Torah want to teach us here?

In order to understand that we have to go

back to Parashat Bereshit where we read that Adam was actually cursed because he listened to his wife. And these are the words of the פסוק:

וְלֵאדָם אָמַר כִּי-שָׁמַעְתָּ לְקוֹל אִשְׁתְּךָ... אָרוּרָה  
הָאֲדָמָה בְּעִבְדוֹךָ בְּעִצְבוֹן תֹּאכְלֶנָּה כֹּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ:  
'To Adam He said, because you did as your wife said... Cursed be the ground because of you, By toil shall you eat off it, all the days of your life.'

What is the difference between what happened with Adam and the commandment of G-d to Abraham?

In Hebrew there is a difference between 'לִשְׁמָע... listen to...' And 'שָׁמַע ב'... Listen to what is within ...'

G-d tells Adam, and he tells us as well. When it comes to listening to your spouse, children, friends, disciples, G-d doesn't want you to only listen to the words they say. To listen לקול, without trying to identify where these words come from, why did they say it, what caused them to express themselves in such a manner. G-d tells Adam, because

you did as your wife said, without seeing that all she wants, as understood from the Midrash, only to be together with her husband, to share the same experiences, to accompany each other. Because you listened לקול and not בקול, 'cursed be the ground because of you.' The right way of listening is, שְׁמַע אֵלַי שְׂרָה שְׁמַע, בקולה. In her voice, beyond the words, the internal meaning of what she is saying.

Sometimes the people around us have difficulty expressing themselves, they might express fear by using anger; aggressiveness can be used in attempt to hide their weaknesses and when they shout at you to go away, all they really need, is for you to hug them and to be there for them. To listen out for what is beyond their words. They want you to really listen, G-d wants us to really listen. May we all merit to improve our 'listening skills' and merit that השם will listen to our תפילות, to fulfil our deepest wishes from the bottom of our hearts, our inner desires.





## RABBI DANNY FISHER

Director - TAL Boys After School Programs

### PARSHAT VAYERA

In this week פרשה we find the עקידה when אברהם is commanded by ה' to offer up his son. The עקידה is famously אברהם's tenth and final test, furthermore it is also his greatest and most difficult test. In פרשת נח we are introduced to אברהם, and אברהם says פסוק וימת הרן על פני תרח. אברהם, the פסוק says בואר כשדים רש"י that אברהם was thrown into the fire for destroying his father's תרם's זרה עבודה. Rav Moshe Sternbuch asks, if אברהם was able to destroy all his fathers' עבודה and then willingly jump into the fire as a punishment, an act that required huge amounts of נפש, why doesn't the תורה itself tell us about it. Why is it only told to us in רש"י? The act of נפש which אברהם displayed in אברהם was seemingly greater than that in the עקידה. It was אברהם himself, with his own free choice who decided to destroy the idols, he himself was willing to take the risk and be killed for it,

compared to the עקידה when he was commanded by ה' to offer up his son.

Rav Moshe Sternbuch explains that there are times when ה' instruction does not seem to make sense to us. During those times it requires more effort on our part to listen and carry out what ה' has commanded us. We see this with the אברהם אבינו, "כי ה' had promised ה' and now He is instructing אברהם אבינו to take up to the מזבח as a קרבן, how does this make sense. Furthermore it was אברהם אבינו who taught the world that ה' is the source of רחמים, yet the instruction of the עקידה seems just the opposite chas vesholom. אברהם spent years teaching the world that ה' doesn't desire human sacrifice, yet he was about to do just that. It is easy to see that from a human's perspective, the instruction of the עקידה does not make sense. Yet herein lies the test, and this was where the most amount of נפש was required. It says "שלא מחשבותי מחשבותיכם" ה' thoughts are not like our thoughts. The act of נפש in מסירת נפש made

complete sense to אברהם אבינו, it was obvious what was required of him and yes it demanded some effort. However the very fact that the עקידה seemed to contradict everything that ה' had personified up until now, the very fact that it seemingly did not make intellectual sense is what made it so great an act. That is why it required so much more נפש.

My grandparents were Holocaust survivors who miraculously came through the war with their אמונה intact. Even after this, they found themselves trapped behind the iron curtain during a time in history when many people unfortunately worked on Shabbos, for if not they would be without a job. My grandfather ב"ה had the strength to withstand this huge test and never worked on Shabbos knowing that he was risking his income and livelihood. He never questioned or doubted what was required of him and remained steadfast in his service of Hashem.

Good Shabbos



## HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

### TO WHAT TEMPERATURE MUST WINE BE HEATED TO BE CONSIDERED "MEBUSHAL"?

Halacha forbids drinking wine belonging to a gentile and even wine belonging to a Jew that was touched by a gentile. There is, however, a famous exception to this rule, namely, that "Yayin Mebushal" – wine that has been cooked – does not become forbidden if it is handled by a non-Jew. Once the wine has been heated, it remains permissible even if a non-Jew touches it. There is an important debate among the Halachic authorities regarding the level of heat required for wine to be considered "Mebushal." Whereas some authorities maintained that it suffices for the wine to be hot enough to cause one's finger to recoil on contact, others, including the Shach (Rav Shabtai Ha'kohen, 1622-1663), required heating the wine until it boils and begins to evaporate. This debate directly affects the status the

status of wine or grape juice that has undergone the process of pasteurization, which conventionally is done by bringing the liquid to a temperature of 85 degrees Centigrade (approximately 170 degrees Fahrenheit), but not to the boiling point. (It should also be noted that as the vats are generally covered during pasteurization, no wine evaporates during the process.) According to the Shach, this process does not suffice to render the wine or grape juice "Mebushal," and this is, indeed, the ruling of several authorities, including Hacham Bension Abba Shaul (Israel, 1923-1998), in his Or Le'sion (vol. 2, chapter 20, note 18). This was also the view of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (Israel, 1910-1995). Rav Moshe Feinstein (Russia-New York, 1895-1986), however, in his Iggerot Moshe (Y.D. 1:50), accepted the lenient position, that pasteurization suffices to render wine or grape juice "Mebushal."

Hacham Ovadia Yosef, in his work Yabia Omer (vol. 8, Y.D. 15), ruled that one may rely on the lenient view of Rav Moshe Feinstein, but it is nevertheless preferable to treat pasteurized wine or grape juice as

not "Mebushal" unless it was brought to a boil. If such wine or grape juice was touched by a gentile, one may drink it, but preferably one should not allow a gentile to come in contact with such wine, in deference to the stringent ruling.

In light of the Hacham's ruling, one cannot necessarily rely on a wine company's label that says that the wine is "Mebushal." Before allowing a non-Jew to handle the wine, one should determine whether the wine was brought to a boil, or merely pasteurized. If it was just pasteurized, then the wine is still kosher, but one should try not to allow a non-Jew to touch the wine. As mentioned, however, if a non-Jew did touch such wine, it is nevertheless kosher.

**Summary:** Wine that was touched by a non-Jew may not be drunk, unless it is "Mebushal" – meaning, it was heated. According to some opinions, wine is considered "Mebushal" only if it is brought to a boil, and thus pasteurization does not suffice. It is preferable to follow this view, and thus one should not allow a non-Jew to touch his wine until he has verified that the wine had been brought to a boil.





# WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

## Parshat Vayera

Three days after performing brit mila on himself, Avraham is visited by Hashem. When three angels appear in human form, Avraham rushes to show them hospitality by bringing them into his tent, despite this being the most painful time after the operation. Sarah laughs when she hears from them that she will bear a son next year. Hashem reveals to Avraham that He will destroy Sodom, and Avraham pleads for Sodom to be spared. Hashem agrees that if there are fifty righteous people in Sodom He will not destroy it. Avraham "bargains" Hashem down to ten righteous people. However, not even ten can be found. Lot, his wife and two daughters are rescued just before sulphur and fire rain down on Sodom and her sister cities. Lot's wife looks back and is turned into a pillar of salt. Lot's daughters fear that as a result of the destruction

there will be no husbands for them. They decide to get their father drunk and through him to perpetuate the human race. From the elder daughter, Moav is born, and from the younger, Ammon.

Avraham moves to Gerar where Avimelech abducts Sarah. After Hashem appears to Avimelech in a dream, he releases Sarah and appeases Avraham. As promised a son, Yitzchak, is born to Sarah and Avraham. On the eighth day after the birth, Avraham circumcises him as commanded. Avraham makes a feast the day Yitzchak is weaned. Sarah tells Avraham to banish Hagar and Hagar's son Yishmael because she sees in him signs of degeneracy. Avraham is distressed at the prospect of banishing his son, but Hashem tells him to listen to whatever Sarah tells him to do. After nearly dying of thirst in the desert,

Yishmael is rescued by an angel, and Hashem promises that he will be the progenitor of a mighty nation.

Avimelech enters into an alliance with Avraham when he sees that Hashem is with him. In a tenth and final test of Avraham, Hashem instructs Avraham to take Yitzchak, who is now 37, and to offer him as a sacrifice. Avraham does this, in spite of ostensibly aborting Jewish nationhood and contradicting his life-long preaching against human sacrifice. At the last moment, Hashem sends an angel to stop Avraham. Because of Avraham's unquestioning obedience, Hashem promises him that even if the Jewish People sin, they will never be completely dominated by their foes. The Torah portion concludes with the genealogy and birth of Rivka.

Rabbi Sinclair, [Seasonsofthemoon.com](http://Seasonsofthemoon.com)



1

Why did Hashem appear to Avraham after the brit mila?

18:1 - Avraham was sick, so Hashem came to "visit" him.

2

What were the missions of the three angels?

18:2 - To announce Yitzchak's birth, to heal Avraham and to destroy Sodom.

3

Why did Avraham ask specifically Yishmael, and not someone else, to prepare food for the guests?

18:7 - To train him in the performance of mitzvot.

4

How many angels went to Sodom?

19:1 - Two, one to destroy the city and one to save Lot.

5

Why were Lot and his family not permitted to look back at Sodom?

19:17 - As they, too, deserved to be punished, it wasn't fitting for them to witness the destruction of Sodom.

6

In what merit did Hashem save Lot?

19:29 - Lot had protected Avraham by concealing from the Egyptians the fact that Sarah was his wife.



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