



OHIEL SARA

THE FEMALE VOICE OF TORAH & SONG

Parshat Vayeira

By: Rabanit
K. Sarah Cohen

PARSHA

HALACHA

STORY

Q&A

SHIURIM

JOKE

RIDDLE

QUOTES

DAVEN FOR

PARSHAT VAYEIRA

This week's parshah tells of Avraham Avinu (a"h) experiencing a humbling failure and a superb accomplishment. After Avraham is informed of the wonderful news that a child will be born to him and Sarah, he is given the dreadful news. And although it would not affect him personally, Avraham Avinu took it personally.

Hashem informed Avraham that he would destroy the city of Sedom. The behavior of people in the city was such that diametrically opposed each one of Avraham's values and teachings.

Avraham loved kindness and they preached selfishness. Avraham spoke about Hashem and the Sedomites broadcasted heresy.

In reality, Avraham should have been happy at their final destruction but surprisingly, he is not. He pleads with Hashem to spare them.

"Will You stamp out the righteous together with the wicked?" he cried.

"Perhaps," he continued, "There are fifty righteous men in the city. Shall You not spare the city in the merit of the fifty?" (Vayera: 23-24)

Unfortunately, there were not fifty or forty righteous men to be found. In fact, there were not even ten.

Hashem therefore, did not spare Sedom. Avraham lost his case and the Torah Hakedoshah tells us that, "Hashem departed after He finished speaking to Avraham and Avraham returned to his place" (Vayera: 33).

What does the Torah imply when it states that, "Avraham returned to his place?"

Where else should he go? This is not the only time that Avraham "returns."

At the end of the parshah we read of Avraham's great faith and strength when he is commanded to bring up his only son Yitzchak (a"h), as an Olah.

Unquestioning and determined, Avraham embarks to fulfill Hashem's wishes. But before the knife reaches his son's neck, a malach stops Avraham and informs him that he has passed the test of commitment. Hashem then promises to increase his offspring like the stars and declares that all the nations of the world will be blessed through Avraham's offspring.

After this remarkable incident, the Torah tells us that "Avraham returned to his young men."

What does the Torah wish to teach us? Of course he returned. Should he stay on the mountain forever?

The answer can be explained with a story.



REFUAH SHLEIMAH

Yonah bat Henya

Michael ben Yonah

Ro'ee ben Rachel

Maya bat Ilana

Ben Tzvi ben Ilana

Gidon ben Esther

Esther bat Mazal

Yosef ben Devorah

Yaffa bat Rivka

Rivkah bat Malkah

Nissan ben Liza

David ben Liza

Freida Leah
bat

Pesha Rachel

Yehoshuah Mordechai
ben

Leah Gita

Chaim Yehudah
ben
Aidel

Irin bat Sonya

Udel bat Hinda Shaindel

Rabbi Abish (a"h), the Rav of Frankfurt who was known for his extraordinary humility, would often raise money for the poor families of his city. Once, he heard that a wealthy man was in town on business and he went to the man's hotel suite to request a donation.

The millionaire was arrogant and assumed that the Rabbi was a poor beggar. He proceeded to throw the Rabbi out of his room. A few minutes later the man went to leave his suite and looked for his silver cane. Noticing it was gone, he immediately suspected that Rabbi Abish took it during his brief visit. The wealthy man ran toward the lobby of the hotel where he attacked Reb Abish.

"Thief! Give me back my cane!" he screamed.

Reb Abish calmly pleaded. "I did not steal your cane. Please do not accuse me! Please believe me. I did not steal your cane!"

The man was adamant in his arrogance and began to hit the Rabbi while onlookers recoiled in horror. Despite the pain, Reb Abish remained steadfast in his humble demeanor.

"Please believe me. I did not steal your cane!"

Finally, the man realized he was getting nowhere and left Reb Abish in disgust.

That Shabat was Shabat Shuvah. The entire community, including the wealthy visitor, packed Frankfurt's main shul for the traditional Shabat Shuvah lecture. Horror gripped the visitor as a familiar looking figure rose to the podium and mesmerized the vast audience with an eloquent Shiur Torah. It was that very "shnorer" he had attacked in the hotel!

Immediately following the speech, the man pushed his way toward the podium and with tears in his eyes he wanted to ask forgiveness for his terrible behavior.

Suddenly, Reb Abish noticed the man and with a deep sincerity Reb Abish began to softly plead with him.

"I beg of you please do not hit me. I truly did not steal your cane."

Avraham's greatness caused his humility in every circumstance, in victory and defeat.

After losing the case of Sedom, he returns. After his amazing accomplishment of the Akeidah, he returns. Avraham Avinu returns home, never showing the haughty spoils of victory or the despondent embarrassment of defeat. He remained constant in his service to Hashem and in his attitude to his family and peers.

Avraham does not revel in victory nor despair in defeat. He returns the same way as he leaves. Steadfast in faith and constant in character.



THE MERIT OF RIGHTEOUS WOMEN

A Series On Devorah Ha'neviyah

Part 2

As long as Devorah Ha'neviyah (a"h) lived, for forty years Eretz Yisrael was quiet and no enemy dared attack. Bnei Yisrael did complete teshuvah and followed the path of Torah and Mitzvot. Devorah Ha'neviyah was called Eshet Lapidot (flames). Why? Because she reached prophecy on the level of Moshe Rabbeinu (a"h). When she experienced nevuah people could see flames of burning fire and lightning-bolts from above her tent.

In her famous song, *Shirat Devorah*, we learn that "From heaven they fought; the very stars fought from their tracks with Sisera." How exactly did the very stars miraculously transcend the normal laws of nature to bring about the defeat of the Canaanim?

We learn that the miracle occurred in a sudden, totally unexpected tornado that swooped in from the region stretching from the Rift Valley (Aravah) to Yam Ha'Kineret east of the Lower Galilee. It brought torrents of pelting rain that turned the Kishon Valley into a treacherous muddy swamp that completely incapacitated the iron chariots of Sisera's army and swept them into the river, forcing Sisera to flee with disgrace. The miracle was not that there was a tornado since there were periodic storms in that region. The miracle was that the tornado came exactly when it did.

The other heroine of this story was Yael (a"h), who was one of the most remarkable converts of all time. Chachamim teach that she was from the root neshamah of Leah Imeinu (a"h). She was the wife of Chever Ha'Keini and she cleverly offered Sisera warm milk to drink when he entered her tent. This caused him to doze off exhausted from the battle. She then took a tent peg and smashed his head.



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It was fitting that his mind was the organ that was shattered. The Ari Ha'kadosh (a"h) revealed that Sisera's hold on the Jewish people was in the mind (Daat).

With the destruction of the unholy husk (Sisera's brain), the holy spark of Rabbi Akiva (a"h) was released from the union of Sisera and Yael. Rabbi Chaim Vital (a"h) offers an explanation he heard from his Rabbi, the Ari Ha'kadosh on the subject of Devorah Ha'neviyah: "And my master told me that my soul was there too."

An allusion to Rabbi Akiva being a descendant from Sisera is when Sisera asked Yael: "היש פה איש - is there a person here?" In Gematria, the value of the words, "יש פה," equals 395. This is the same gematria as the name Rabbi Akiva (רבי עקיבא). We are also told that Chever Ha'Keini (Yael's husband) was a gilgul of Rachav a non-Jewish native of Canaan who became the wife of Yehoshuah Ben Nun (a"h). She protected Pinchas and Kaleb (a"h) and promised them that she and all of her family would convert to Judaism. Rachav and Chaver (חבר - רחב) share the same letters.

The Ari Ha'kadosh states that Yael became a gilgul of Eli Ha'Kohen (a"h) who served as Kohen Gadol and judged Bnei Yisrael for forty years in Shiloh and became the teacher of Shmuel Ha'navi (a"h). יעל has the same letters as עלי Yael's husband, Chever Ha'keini astoundingly became the gilgul of Chanah, the mother of Shmuel Ha'navi (a"h).

We are taught that this is the reason that Chanah (the gilgul of Chaver, Yael's husband) was unable to conceive as she had in her a male root, a male soul. But when Eli Ha'Kohen (the gilgul of Yael) blessed her in Shiloh that is when she was able to conceive and bring a child into the world. Yael was reincarnated into Yehudit (a"h), who became an integral part of the Chanukah story. She was the daughter of Yochanan Kohen Gadol (a"h) of the Chashmonaim Dynasty.

THE HUMBLE SERVANT

Once, the Baal Shem Tov Hakadosh (a"h) spent Shabat in Polnoye, the hometown of his talmid, Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polnoye (a"h). The Baal Shem Tov was traveling in quite a fancy carriage and a resident of the town, a well-known instigator, used the opportunity to disparage the Baal Shem Tov for what he deemed unwarranted opulence.

The Baal Shem Tov however, was unmoved by his taunts.

"Let me relate to you a parable," he offered. "A king once searched the world over for the fountain of youth, an elixir that would guarantee him immortality. A wise man came before the king and offered him a remedy. He must absolutely remove from himself any trace of arrogance and conduct himself with utter humility. The suggestion of the wise man found favor in the king's eyes and he immediately began its implementation.

"It was not long before the king stopped riding in his royal carriage and instead, walked behind it on foot. However, the more he took humble behavior upon himself, the haughtier he became. 'Look at me,' he would think as he pictured himself in his mind's eye. 'I am a powerful King, yet see how I carry myself. No one is more humble than I!'

"The wise man however saw through the sham. 'Your Majesty,' he cajoled, 'This is not what I intended. You should indeed be riding in the Royal carriage but in your heart you should feel contrite and humble like the man walking **behind** the carriage. This kind of humility is acquired with much greater effort and sacrifice. It is however, genuine humility."

The Baal Shem Tov explained this according to an idea found in the Shabat prayer of *Nishmat Kol Chai*.

"And all that *stand* before You shall *bow down*...."

One can *bow* even while *standing* erect. When searching for a route towards better service of Hashem many of us exaggerate the midah we are working on and inevitably tend to become haughty as a result of the Avodat Hashem. The key is to remember that because we are climbing higher on the ladder of spirituality and coming closer to the King, we must be true to the midah we are working on and utilize sincere humility as a means towards our goal.

We can be riding IN the royal carriage of spirituality but in our hearts we must feel like the humble servant who is always walking behind that very carriage.

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Rabanit K. Sarah Cohen will be speaking on the following dates:

Date: Nov 12, 2017

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Place: 1175 E. Laurelton Pkwy
Teaneck, NJ

Date: Nov 15, 2017

Time: 8:15pm

Place: 902 Ocean Pkwy #6D - Bklyn, NY

Date: Nov 29, 2017

Time: 8:15pm

Place: 902 Ocean Pkwy #6D - Bklyn, NY

Date: Sun. Dec. 3, 2017

Time: 8:00pm

Place: 902 Ocean Pkwy #6D - Bklyn, NY

CHANUKAH PARTY

FEE: \$28.00 - RSVP ONLY

Date: Wed. Dec. 20, 2017

Time: 8:15pm

Place: 902 Ocean Pkwy #6D - Bklyn, NY

SPECIAL GATHERING IN HONOR OF ZOT CHANUKAH

Date: Dec 27, 2017

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Date: Wed. Jan. 3, 2018

Time: 8:15pm

Place: 902 Ocean Pkwy #6D - Bklyn, NY

Date: Wed. Jan. 17, 2017

Time: 8:15pm

Place: 902 Ocean Pkwy #6D - Bklyn, NY

Date: Wed. Jan. 31, 2018

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Parshat Vayeira

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HASHEM IS WITH YOU

The man whispered, "Hashem, please speak to me."
And a meadowlark began to sing with sounds so dear.
But the man was too busy to listen and did not hear.

The man then yelled, "Hashem, I ask You to speak to me!"
And the thunder rolled across the sky as it glistened.
But the man was too occupied with his day and did not listen.

The man looked around and said, "Hashem, let me see You."
And a star shone brightly in the sky.
But the man did not notice all the beauty on high.

He shouted, "Hashem, show me a miracle!"
And a life was born with the gift to grow.
But the man did not realize, he just did not know.

So, the man cried out in despair.
"Touch me in some way Hashem and let me know that you're here!"
Hashem then sent a small touch to awaken the man on that day.
But the man brushed the butterfly off his shoulder and sadly walked away.

Let us not miss out on a blessing because it is not packaged the way we expect.
Hashem is all around us and waits for us to hear Him, see Him, notice Him and know Him.



CUTE STORY

A man and his wife were dining at a table in a fancy restaurant and the husband kept staring at a drunken lady drinking her Vodka as she sat alone at a nearby table.

His wife then asked, "Do you know her?"

"Yes," sighs the husband, "She's my ex-wife. She took up drinking right after we divorced four years ago and I hear she hasn't been sober since."

"My Goodness!" says the wife, "Who would think a person could go on celebrating that long?"

QUOTABLE QUOTES

** "Everything and everyone around you is your teacher." **

** "What you WANT is irrelevant. What you have chosen is at hand."

** "If you are busy judging people, you will not have time to love them." **



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Sara Bat Mimon Ha'Kohen (A"H)

Ohel Sara is named after this tzadikah (my grandmother). May the inspiration that women draw from this weekly newsletter benefit her neshamah in Gan Eden and may we all be redeemed as a result.



Ohel Sara wishes all it's readers a Shabbat Shalom u'Mevorach!



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