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A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

פרשת וירא

וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו ה' בְּאֵלֶיךָ מִמְרָא וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח הָאֵהָל כְּחֹם הַיּוֹם. וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אַנְשִׁים נֹצְבִים עָלָיו, וַיֵּרָא וַיָּרֶץ לִקְרָאתָם מִפֶּתַח הָאֵהָל וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אַרְצָה וכו' (בראשית יח, א-ב)

Hashem appeared to him in the plains of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day. He lifted his eyes and saw: And behold! three men were standing over him. He saw, and he ran towards them from the entrance of the tent, and bowed toward the ground ... (Bereishis 18:1-2)

This week's *Sidrah* begins with Avrohom Avinu recovering from his *bris milah*. He is sitting at the entrance of his tent under the blazing sun, waiting for guests. When three men came into sight, Avrohom rushed toward them, invited them into his home, and served a lavish feast.

The *parshah* goes into detail about Avrohom's encounter with these guests. Although they appeared to be simple desert travellers, he treated them with the utmost respect, bowing to them and addressing them as his masters. Avrohom prepared special cakes from the finest flour and even *shechted* three cows to provide each guest with a delicacy: an entire tongue with mustard, along with cream and milk. He waited on them hand and foot, presenting them with everything he had.

R' Leib *zatzal* in Meorei Sheorim presents a question from R' Simcha Zissel of Kelm: Was this the first time that Avrohom invited guests into his home? Rashi notes elsewhere that Avrohom's typical approach was to invite guests to eat, and once they were done, he would redirect their gratitude toward the true Provider who sustains the world with goodness. If that is the case, why did the Torah choose to highlight this specific act of Hachnosas Orchim in such detail? Additionally, given that the visitors were actually *malochim* disguised as guests, Avrohom's kindness was unnecessary in this instance?

The answer lies in the broader context of this particular act of inviting guests. Avrohom was nearly 100 years old and recovering from his *bris milah*, which had taken place just three days earlier. Consequently, Hashem wanted to prevent travellers from disturbing Avrohom, and as Rashi cites from Chazal, He brought out the sun from its sheath. However, Avrohom felt pained by the situation, even though he had every excuse to rest and there were no guests around. Why? Because he loved performing *chessed*. He didn't engage in *chessed* because he was obligated to; it was his passion and desire. Thus, Hashem sent him three angels as guests.

We can understand the pain that comes from a lack of basic necessities, such as someone starving for food or lacking sufficient finances to live. We can also empathise with the suffering of an alcoholic desperate for wine or a chain smoker in urgent need of their next cigarette. However, it's difficult for us to grasp the anguish of someone who feels pain because they can't perform an act of kindness. Incredibly, in Avrohom's case, his heartache over being unable to perform *chessed* was greater than the physical pain he experienced from his *bris milah*.

For this reason, the Torah emphasises this specific act of Avrohom's Hachnosas Orchim. The Torah conveys the extent to which Avrohom was the pillar of *chessed*, as the *possuk* states (*Michah* 7:20): חֶסֶד לְאַבְרָהָם. Avrohom did not just **do** *chessed*; he **loved** *chessed*. His remarkable ability to rush towards his guests at close to the age of 100, even while recovering from surgery, can only be attributed to love. Love transcends all barriers, and it was this love that fuelled Avrohom's incredible deeds in this *parshah*. This also addresses the second question: Avrohom's motivation for his acts of *chessed* was not driven by fulfilling a need; rather, he engaged in *chessed* for its own sake. The outcome was not important; the Torah emphasises his passion and love for this *mitzvah*.

This lesson about loving *mitzvos* applies not only to acts of *chessed* but to every area of Torah and *mitzvos*. This principle is illustrated in the Tochachah, which, after detailing the terrible calamities that will befall Klal Yisroel, explains the reasons behind them. As the *possuk* (*Devorim* 28:47) states, תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר לֹא עָבַדְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוֹב לֵבָב, *because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, with joy and with goodness of heart*. We are expected to recognise the immense value of the Torah and *mitzvos* we fulfil, acting out of joy and love rather than obligation.

This concept also clarifies the apparent repetition found in the *tefillah* of Birkas HaChodesh. After the requests of חַיִּים שֶׁל טוֹבָה, חַיִּים שֶׁל בְּרָכָה, חַיִּים שֶׁל פְּרֻקָּה וכו', *a life of goodness, blessing, sustenance ... a life in which there is fear of Heaven and fear of sin*, we conclude with the request of חַיִּים שֶׁתִּהְיֶה בְּנוֹ אֱהָבַת תּוֹרָה וְיִרְאַת שָׁמַיִם, *a life in which we will have love of Torah and fear of Heaven*. This raises an obvious question: why is the concept of חַיִּים שֶׁל יִרְאַת שָׁמַיִם mentioned a second time, given that we have already *davened* for it?

With the above lesson, the answer becomes clear. There are two dimensions to life with Yiras Shamayim: one that exists simply as fear of Heaven, and another that includes **Ahavas** Yiras Shamayim. The final request of חַיִּים שֶׁתִּהְיֶה בְּנוֹ אֱהָבַת תּוֹרָה וְיִרְאַת שָׁמַיִם is a plea for Hashem to instil in us a love for Torah and a love for fear of Heaven. It is only through love for Hashem and His Torah that we can ensure our spiritual growth endures. Joy, which arises from a genuine love for our endeavours, is essential for maintaining our Avodas Hashem under all circumstances.

R' Leib concludes by teaching us how to develop a genuine love for Torah and Yiras Shamayim: through learning Torah and studying Mussar. However, this progress can only be achieved by exploring the depths of Torah and appreciating the profound lessons of Mussar. Such engagements will cultivate a meaningful connection to both, leading to a love for Torah and Yirah that ensures a person's long-term relationship with Hashem and the fulfilment of His will.

In our *parshah*, we learn about the incredible devotion of Avrohom Avinu to Hachnosas Orchim. His dedication stemmed not just from a sense of duty, but from his immense love for *chessed*. When someone truly loves something, nothing can stand in their way - not even severe physical pain or harsh weather conditions. We should strive to emulate Avrohom's example and fulfil Torah and *mitzvos* with love and joy, ensuring their lasting practice in the best possible way.

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