



Snapshot Torah



GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

SECOND EDITION / ISSUE 4

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Va'eira

15th Cheshvan 5745

Kohen - First Aliya: Page 86, Chapter 18, Verses 1 – 14

- ✚ Even though Avraham (Abraham) was still healing after his Bris Mila, Hashem found him sitting at the opening of his tent, looking out for visitors who were passing through on their travels.
- ✚ In the Heat of the day Avraham looks up and sees three strangers approaching him. Avraham then immediately rushes out to greet them and invited them back to his tent, in order for them to wash and partake in a meal which his wife Sarah helped to prepare.
- ✚ The three men were really three angels in disguise who informed Avraham that Sarah will give birth to a son. Upon overhearing this news Sarah laughed telling herself how impossible that sounded because both Avraham and her were now too old to bore any children.

Levi - Second Aliya: Page 88, Chapter 18, Verses 15 - 33

- ✚ Upon leaving, the Angels told Avraham Hashem's intentions of wiping out the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their wickedness.
- ✚ Avraham pleaded and bartered with Hashem to save Sodom from destruction if 50 righteous men were found to be dwelling there right down until Avraham had to concede to the fact there were no righteous men at all living there and hence had to be destroyed.

Shlishi - Third Aliya: Page 92, Chapter 19, Verses 1 - 20

- ✚ Disguised once more as men, two angels arrived in Sodom and were greeted by Lot who even though was breaking the cardinal law of Sodom, welcomed them into his home with open arms.
- ✚ After trying to save the 2 men from the hostile town folk of Sodom, the angels reveal their true identities and commands lot to take his family and leave immediately and don't look back so they can save themselves from the oncoming destruction of the city.

R'VI'I - Fourth Aliya: Page 96, Chapter 19, Verse 21 – Chapter 21, Verse 5

- ✚ Lot's wife did look back and was turned to a pillar of salt.
- ✚ Thinking that they were now the sole survivors after the destruction, Lot's two daughters got Lot drunk and impregnated themselves in order to repopulate the world. (Their offspring later became the nations of the Moabites and the Ammonites.)
- ✚ Sarah is kidnaped by Abimelech and once more Avraham had to claim she was his sister to survive and rescue her.
- ✚ later at the age of 99 Sarah gives birth to a son whom is called Yitzchak (Isaac)

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya: Page 103, Chapter 21, Verses 5 - 21

- ✚ Hagar and Ismael are banished from the home of Avraham. Hashem promises her that the offspring of Ishmael will become a great nation.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya: Page 106, Chapter 21, Verses 22 - 34

- ✚ Abimelech asks Avraham to sign a peace treaty, agreeing that neither party would not wage war against each other for at least two generations. Avraham assented on the condition that a dispute over the ownership of some wells were addressed first. **Please read 'Weekly Discussion' for more insights.**

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya: Page 108, Chapter 22, Verses 1 - 24

- ✚ (The Akeidah) Hashem tells Avraham to take his son Yitzchak and offer him up as a Korban (Sacrifice).
- ✚ Without delay Avraham obeys. Proving himself; an angel halts Avraham in the nick of time and a Ram caught up in a nearby bush is sacrificed in Yitzchak's place.

Haftorah – Page 113, 2nd book of Kings Chapter 4 verses 1 to 37

OVERVIEW:

- ✚ This week's Haftorah contains two stories about the prophet Elisha.
- ✚ Firstly, an unnamed woman who is in debt comes to Elisha for help. Her husband has died, and she is so destitute that her children are about to be taken away to be sold as slaves.
- ✚ The only thing of value she had was a small jug of pure oil. Elisha then instructs her to borrow as many vessels as she can from her neighbours and to pour the oil from her vessel into the other ones. Miraculously, the oil does not run out, lasting long enough to fill all the borrowed jugs.
- ✚ Elisha, then tells her, "Go sell the oil and with the profits, pay off your debts and, then you and your children will be able to live comfortably on the remainder.
- ✚ The second story is about a Shunamite woman who was unable to conceive children. To reward her for her kind hospitality towards him, Elisha blessed her with a son
- ✚ Unfortunately the child dies young, so grieving woman returns once more to Elisha for comfort.
- ✚ With Hashem's help, Elisha was able to perform a miracle and managed to resurrect the boy's life.

LINK TO SEDRA READING:

- ✚ There is a strong connection between the torah reading and the Haftorah. In both places Avraham and Sarai in the Torah and the Shunamite woman were desperate to have a child.
- ✚ The Angels tell Avraham "just like you're alive today, you will be alive next year.
- ✚ Elisha in the Haftorah. Prophesises that a child will be born to the Shunamite woman using the same exact phrase used by the angels.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION: The Akeidah

Out of all the tests Hashem placed before Avraham to face, at first glance, Hashem's request of sending Avraham out to kill his beloved son Yitzchak was not only unreasonable but horrifyingly cruel. To understand the Akeidah more I think it's important to understand what Hashem was not doing.

Firstly Hashem was not enticing Avraham to break any of the torah laws especially 'Thou shall not Murder' nor was Hashem condoning child sacrifices as we learnt back in parshas Re'eh in Devarim, that Hashem abhors such an act. So much so that it was Hashem himself who prevented Avraham from going through with it and presented a ram whom was caught up in a thicket to be offered up as a Korban in Yitzchak's stead. There was no desire at all of Hashem wanting Avraham to take a human life. The test was for Avraham to demonstrate to himself and the world that he had complete faith in Hashem and would place this loyalty to serve him wholeheartedly even if it meant he had to deprive his beloved son of life to prove it.

I have read some articles in the past where the authors were challenging the fact whether Avraham truly loved Yitzchak at all because if he did then surely Avraham wouldn't even contemplate and be willing to carry out Hashem's commands of sacrificing him. However I know for a fact: The words of the torah clearly state and emphasize that Avraham did truly love Yitzchak. Firstly he was the only child of his beloved wife Sarah and secondly Hashem refers to Yitzchak himself as "your only son, whom you love". So the question I think they should have been asking was, how was Avraham able to carry it out because he loved his son so much?

The Answer I think is this, Avraham had known and trusted Hashem for many years prior to this, and so he had a good understanding of Hashem's character. Avraham knew that Hashem had the right to test him, after all he is Hashem whose intellect and reasoning are far beyond any man's comprehension to question his will. Had Avraham initiated the sacrifice of Yitzchak or followed the order of someone else who was not authorized by Hashem, then it goes without saying, the act would have been wrong and Avraham would have been punished accordingly.

Just because nowhere in this week's sedra or in any other Parsha come to think of it; does it record Avraham's emotional reaction to Hashem's command, it does not mean carrying it out was an easy thing for him to do. Yet despite this, Avraham knew that Hashem had promised him offspring through his son Yitzchak, so it gave him deep down, the confidence and belief that Hashem had no intention for Yitzchak to die; which I strongly believe was ultimately the test which Avraham passed with flying colours.

No matter what tests or challenges we all face in our lives, may we all be blessed to have the potential and ability of emulating in Avraham's footsteps of putting our complete trust and faith in Hashem so we can overcome them.

