



Snapshot Torah



GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

THIRD EDITION

31st October 2015

Va'eira

18th Cheshvan 5776

Kohen - First Aliya:

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:

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:

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:

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:

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:

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:

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 – 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.

GEMATRIA LINKED TO THE SEDRA:

- ✚ How did the commentators of the torah come to the conclusion that the three men Avram saw approaching his tent were in fact three angels? The answer lies in gematria.
- ✚ The Numerical value of the phrase והנה שלשה v'hinay shloshe (and behold three) comes to 701. Which when added up together, corresponds to the same numeric value of three of the well-known angels. Michael, Gavriel and Rafael.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION:

Hachnasat Orchim (welcoming guests) is a core Jewish value, perfectly modelled by Avraham and Sarah. When guests unexpectedly arrived at the tent of Abraham and Sarah, the couple warmly welcomed the visitors, made them comfortable, and fed them generously. This week's Sedra of Vayera, starts in the same fashion. On the third day after Avraham performed his Bris on himself at the age of 99 years, Hashem Himself comes to visit. (Which as a side issue, shows us the implications on how important it is for us to care for and visit those people who are unfortunately unwell.)

Surely having Hashem visiting you personally, can only be described as the ultimate spiritual height any person can experience. Yet surprisingly, instead of showing his gratitude and is Elated to be in the company of such a great Presence. Avraham feels dejected and discomforted by Hashem being there, due to the lack of travellers around for Avraham to bestow his Chessed upon, enabling him to perform the mitzvah of Hachnasat Orchim. Noticing that Avraham is suffering more by the pain due to the absence of guests than by his own medical condition, Hashem decides to provide him with three wanderers who are quickly passing by. What does Avraham do? He briefly excuses himself, asks Hashem to wait, putting him on hold in effect, while he busies himself and his family to assist in feeding these three heat stricken strangers. Wow!

From here we learn that it is greater to play the host than to receive even the Divine Presence but where did Avraham learn this principle from?" I once heard the following answer in a shiur I once attended. The verse in the torah states, "He saw and he ran to greet them..." i.e. Abram's feet went instinctively! His initial impulse especially after such an ordeal of going through a Bris was considered already correct. Avraham's perfected body was not an interposition between his 'Godly Soul' and its desire for generous action. Avraham was so refined to the nth degree that his physical body was no less than a rubber glove worn by a skilled surgeon or as the nimble fingers of a concert pianist. The true intention of his actions is easily expressed in an unimpeded fashion through the vehicle of his earthly limbs

Further proof of this thesis is shown later on in the Parsha, by the Akeidah (The Binding of Isaac) the verse records concerning Avraham, "And he sent out his hand and he took the knife to slaughter his son..." Ultimately we know that Hashem did not want him to kill Yitzchak but only to be willing to deliver him. Therefore we are told "he sent out his hand to take the knife". It's the same when you pick up your coffee in the morning. You don't need to send your hand out consciously to the mug. It automatically reaches in that vicinity because you are thirsty. Since Abraham's instinct was already presumed 'holy', he therefore needed to force his hand into action in order to harm or kill his son' i.e. to go against his moral instincts. To obey the word of Hashem, no matter what.

For fear that we'll be misled to believe that we ought to obey our limb's intrinsic actions, we have to recognise that Avraham was on a much higher level, than we could ever aspire to. We can however just like a pianist who practices the musical scales before reaching the musicality within; can train our limbs in the same way and dare not over-trust our gut reflexes or instincts. Otherwise we could end up in some hot water or worse. Therefore, we require a sophisticated Code of Law to navigate our lives affectively and to acquire, as Avraham did, those habits of action that can access the secrets and true desires

