

SOMETHING TO EAT

by Shlomo Katz

BS"D

18 Marcheshvan 5777

November 19, 2016

Sponsored by

Mrs. Rochelle Dimont and family

on the yahrzeits of

grandmother and great-grandmother

Chaya Sorah Tarshish a"h

mother-in-law and grandmother

Chana Dimont a"h

and father and grandfather

Rabbi Elazar Tarshish Halevi a"h

The midrash states: Hashem saw that the Jewish People had no merit with which to enter the Land; then He "remembered" the merit of Yitzchak, who was born when his father was 100 and his mother was 90 [as described in our Parashah]. The combined ages of Yitzchak's parents parallel the Gematria of the Hebrew word "Canaan" [the nation from which Yitzchak's descendants conquered the Land], which is 190. [Until here from the midrash]

R' Chaim Palagi z"l (Izmir, Turkey; 1788-1868) explains this enigmatic midrash as follows: We read in Parashat Noach that Canaan was cursed because of his disrespect to his grandfather Noach [see Rashi to 9:29]. In contrast, Yitzchak exemplified the highest level of Kibud Av / parental respect that any person ever reached when he believed his father that he (Yitzchak) was meant to be offered as a sacrifice. Therefore, it is fitting that Yitzchak should take the Land from Canaan. In general, our Sages say, one merits a share in Eretz Yisrael in the merit of Kibud Av Va'eim. (Artzot Ha'chaim p.22)

Elsewhere, R' Palagi writes about Yitzchak's Kibud Av Va'eim: The knife that Avraham took to perform the Akeidah is referred to in the Torah as a "Ma'achelet" from the root which means "to eat." Why is the more common word "Sakin" / "knife" not used? The verse is alluding to the fact that the Kibud Av Va'eim that Yitzchak practiced is a mitzvah whose reward his descendants "eat." Similarly, the Gemara (Shabbat 127a) teaches: "These are the things whose fruits man eats in this world, but whose principle is preserved for the World-to-Come: Kibud Av Va'eim . . ." (Tochachat Chaim: Parashat Toldot p.201)

"He said, 'My Master, if I find favor in Your eyes, please do not go away from Your servant'." (18:3)

Rashi z"l writes: He asked G-d to wait for him while he ran to invite the travelers.

R' Yerachmiel Fried shlita (Rosh Kollel in Dallas, Texas) quotes R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z"l (Yerushalayim; 1910-1995) as observing that Halachah does not permit a person to interrupt Shemoneh Esrei in order to welcome a guest, in contrast to Avraham's interrupting his encounter with the Shechinah in order to welcome guests. We are able to learn a lofty principle from Avraham's action--that welcoming guests is greater than greeting the Shechinah--only because Avraham Avinu lived before the Torah was given and therefore was not obligated to observe Halachah. He could make judgments about which action seemed more important. We, in contrast, do not have that latitude and our value system must be based on Halachah.

R' Auerbach adds: We say in the Pesach Haggadah, "If He had (only) brought us close to Har Sinai and not given us the Torah, Dayeinu / for that too we would have been obligated to thank Him." What would have been the value of coming to Har Sinai and not receiving the Torah? The answer is that there was a great revelation at Har Sinai. We learn from Dayeinu, however, that having a significant "spiritual experience" is not synonymous with receiving the Torah. (Ma'adanei Shlomo: Mo'adim p.126)

"Then Avraham ran to the cattle, took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the youth who hurried to prepare it." (18:7)

Rashi z"l comments: The youth was Yishmael, whom Avraham instructed to do this in order to train him to the performance of Mitzvot [in this case the Mitzvah of hospitality].

R' Yechiel Michel Zilber shlita (Rosh Yeshiva of the Zhvil Yeshiva in Yerushalayim) observes: We read at the end of last week's parashah (17:25), "His son Yishmael was thirteen years old when he was circumcised." This incident took place a few days later. From here we can learn that a father's obligation of Chinuch / instructing his son in the way of the Torah does not end when the child turns thirteen. (Tipah Min Ha'yam)

"For I have loved him, because he will instruct his children and his household after him to keep the way of Hashem . . ." (18:19)

After all that Avraham did--allowing himself to be thrown into a furnace, leaving his homeland, etc.--the attribute that Hashem loves most about Avraham is that he will instruct his children to keep the way of Hashem! This demonstrates, says R' Aryeh Levin z"l (1885-1969; known as the "Tzaddik of Yerushalayim" and as the "Father of the Prisoners" for his role as chaplain of the Yerushalayim

prison), that all of Avraham's and our own tests and challenges are meaningful only if we successfully transmit our beliefs to the ensuing generations. (Quoted in Brito Le'hodi'am p.96)

"So he said, 'Let not my Master be annoyed and I will speak but this once: What if ten [Tzaddikim] would be found there [in S'dom]?' And He said, 'I will not destroy on account of the ten.'"

"Hashem departed when He had finished speaking to Avraham, and Avraham returned to his place." (18:32-33)

Midrash Rabbah asks: Why did Avraham not pray that S'dom be saved even if there were fewer than ten Tzaddikim there? The Midrash answers: Because there were eight survivors of the Generation of the Flood (i.e., Noach, his wife, their three sons, and their three daughters-in-law), and the world was not saved in their merit. [Until here from the Midrash]

The answer offered by the Midrash requires explanation: Perhaps eight Tzaddikim could not save the entire world, but who is to say that eight Tzaddikim is not enough to save one city, such as S'dom?

R' Shmuel Yafeh Ashkenazi z"l (16th century; rabbi of the Ashkenazi community of Constantinople) answers: Surely, the Midrash doesn't mean that Avraham did not ask about eight Tzaddikim because Noach's eight family members could not save the entire world. The proof is that Avraham did ask about ten, which (according to the interpretation assumed by our question) would imply that the merit of Noach's family would have saved the whole world if they had numbered ten! But, if that were so, why couldn't Avraham's household, which surely numbered ten Tzaddikim, save the entire world (including S'dom)?

Rather, R' Ashkenazi explains, the "world" referred to here is only Noach's surroundings. The eight members of Noach's family could not protect even their surroundings. Thus, Avraham knew that the eight Tzaddikim in S'dom, if they existed, could not save their surroundings. As for Avraham's household, they did not live in S'dom, so they could not protect it. (Yefei To'ar)

R' Yechiel Michel ben Uziel z"l (Glogow in Central Europe; died 1730) answers differently: The merit of Avraham's household could not save S'dom because Avraham's household was not covered by the decree against S'dom in the first place. In contrast, the Flood was decreed on the entire world; Noach and his family were covered by the decree and then were extricated from it. Having their own connection to the decree, perhaps Noach's family actually could have saved the entire world if they had numbered ten instead of eight.

A separate question: Why is Noach's son Cham counted by the Midrash as a tzaddik, when he was not? R' Yechiel Michel answers: Perhaps he was righteous when the flood began and later became wicked. Alternatively, he is called righteous because he was innocent of the specific sin that led to

the Flood, i.e., theft. (Nezer Ha'kodesh)

A Torah Tour of the Holy Land

"But the Yevusi, the inhabitants of Yerushalayim, the children of Yehuda were not able to drive out, and the Yevusi dwelled among the children of Yehuda, in Yerushalayim . . ." (Yehoshua 15:63)

"The children of Yehuda then waged war against Yerushalayim. They conquered it . . . and they set the city on fire." (Shoftim 1:8)

"But the children of Binyamin did not drive out the Yevusi, inhabitants of Yerushalayim, so the Yevusi dwelt with the children of Binyamin in Yerushalayim . . ." (Shoftim 1:21)

Regarding the first verse above, our Sages comment: "Not that the tribe of Yehuda did not have the military might to conquer Yerushalayim; rather, they did not have permission to conquer it due to the oath that Avimelech, king of Gerar, demanded (in our parashah--Bereishit 21:23): 'Now swear to me here by Elokim that you will not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my grandson; like the kindness that I have done with you, do with me, and with the land in which you have sojourned'." Avraham replied, "I will swear."

R' Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky z"l (1872-1956; Yerushalayim; author of Gesher Ha'chaim on the laws of mourning) asks: In the second verse, which is describing the same historical period as the first verse, we read that the tribe of Yehuda did conquer Yerushalayim. Then, in the third verse, we read that the tribe of Binyamin [which shared Yerushalayim with the tribe of Yehuda] lived among the Yevusi. Was Yerushalayim conquered during the initial conquest of Eretz Yisrael, or was it not?

R' Tukachinsky explains: Biblical Yerushalayim sat on four hills: Har Ha'moriah (the Temple Mount), Givat Ha'ofel (to the southeast, including the "City of David"), Har Tziyon, and the "northwestern hill." When the second verse says that the tribe of Yehuda conquered Yerushalayim, it refers to Har Tziyon, which was not inhabited by Avimelech's family. Only the Yevusi, who occupied the future Temple Mount and future City of David, included a grandson of Avimelech, so they could not be attacked until a later generation, i.e., in the time of David Ha'melech. (Ir Ha'kodesh Ve'hamikdash II p.8)