AVRAHAM, THE JEWISH PEOPLE, DAAS AND SHABBOS

by Rabbi Binyomin Adler

Introduction

In this week's parasha we find an interesting exchange between Avraham and HaShem. HaShem promises Avraham that He will give him the Land as an inheritance. Avraham responds (Bereishis 15:8) vayomar HaShem Elokim bamah eidah ki irashena, He said, "My Lord, HaShem/Elokim: Whereby shall I know that I am to inherit it?" Hashem responds (Ibid verse 9-13) vayomer eilav kicha li eglah mishuleshes.... Vayomer liAvram yodoa teida ki ger yihyeh zaracha bieretz lo lahem vaavadum viinu osam arba meios shanah, and he said to him, " Take to Me three heifers..." and he said to Avram, "Know with certainty that your offspring shall be aliens in a land not their own - and they will serve them, and they will oppress them - four hundred years." The Gemara (Nedarim 32a) states that because Avraham asked bamah eidah, "whereby shall I know that I am to inherit it?", he was punished with yodoa teida, "Know with certainty..." One must wonder what Avraham did wrong by asking for a sign that his descendants would inherit the Land? Furthermore, even if we were to say that this question was inappropriate, why was Avraham punished so harshly that the Jewish People had to be enslaved to the Egyptians for four hundred years? Lastly, if HaShem sought to punish Avraham for his inappropriate question, why did He first instruct him regarding the taking of the animals to make the pact? It would seem unusual that if one wishes to punish someone that he makes a pact with him?

Understanding Daas

In order to answer these questions, we must first gain an insight into the concept called daas, literally translated as daas. When Avraham asked HaShem, "whereby shall I know that I am to inherit it?", he certainly was not just saying, "HaShem, I need a sign that what You are promising me will come true." Rather, Avraham was demonstrating to HaShem that he recognized that the gift of Eretz Yisroel is based on the Jewish People having a meaningful relationship with HaShem and His Torah. Nonetheless, Avraham posed this idea in a question statement, and this resulted in the Egyptian exile.

Daas is reflected in exile

HaShem informed Avraham that his descendants would be aliens in a land not their own - and they will serve them, and they will oppress them - four hundred years. Yet, HaShem revealed this to Avraham by prefacing this statement with the words yodoa teida, "know with certainty." Why did

HaShem use the same terminology that Avraham used when posing his question? The answer to this question is that HaShem was informing Avraham that his question necessitated a consequence, as he should have had more faith in HaShem than to ask this question. Nonetheless, the response was a way for HaShem to demonstrate his love for Avraham. This is evidenced later when HaShem wishes to inform Avraham that He will be destroying the city of Sodom and its surroundings. It is said (Bereishis 18:19) ki yidaativ limaan asher yitzaveh es banav vies baiso acharav vishamiru derech HaShem laasos tzedakah umishpat limaan havi HaShem al Avraham eis asher diber alav, "for I have loved him, because he commands his children and his household after him that they keep the way of HaShem, doing charity and justice, in order that HaShem might then bring upon Avraham that which He had spoken of him." Thus, we see that HaShem interacted with Avraham through the medium of daas. This theme of daas is extended to the Egyptian exile and its trials and tribulations. Prior to the end of the exile, after the Torah states that HaShem heard the cries of the Jewish People because of their enslavement, it is said (Shemos 2:25) vayar Elokim es binei Yisroel vayeida Elokim, G-d saw the Children of Israel; and G-d knew. Here again we see that the Torah uses the term of daas to refer to HaShem's sympathy and commiseration, so to speak, with the Jewish People.

Daas is reflected in the Torah

The Jewish People were redeemed from Egypt and subsequently they received the Torah at Sinai. The Generation of the Wilderness is referred to as the dor deah, the Generation of Knowledge, as HaShem expressed His endearment to the Jewish People by providing them with a miraculous existence so that they could study His Torah in peace. Thus, we see that when HaShem informed Avraham that yodoa teida, know with certainty, He was hinting that despite the pain and suffering of the Egyptian exile, the Jewish People would emerge even more endearing to HaShem. Summary

Let us return to answer the original questions that we posed. Avraham was punished because he displayed a lack of faith in the promise that HaShem made to him regarding inheriting the Land. Nonetheless, HaShem responded by instructing Avraham to take the animals so He could make a pact with Avraham. This pact reflected the great love that HaShem had for Avraham and for his descendants, the Jewish People. HaShem was demonstrating to Avraham that despite all the trials and tribulations that the Jewish People would undergo in exile, they would know that HaShem always loves them. HaShem gave the Jewish People the Torah so that no matter where they are in the course of history, they can always look into the Torah to be reminded that HaShem loves His Chosen People unconditionally. The Shabbos connection The Torah refers to Shabbos as daas as it is said (Shemos 31:13) viatah dabeir el bnei Yisroel leimor ach es Shabsosai tishmoru ki os hi beini uveineichem ledorseichem ladaas ki ani mikadishchem, now you speak to the Children of Israel, saying: âHowever, you must observe my Sabbaths, for it is a sign between Me and you for your generations, to know that I am HaShem, Who makes you holy.' The Sfas Emes (Ki Sisa 5631) explains that the essential meaning of the word Shabbos is that one attaches himself to the root of life as the six days of the weeks find their source of blessing in Shabbos. Furthermore, the actions of the

Jewish People draw their sustenance from HaShem, and it is through Shabbos that this is made known. It is noteworthy that all opinions agree that the Jewish People received the Torah on Shabbos, as Shabbos is a time of daas. Furthermore, on Shabbos we commemorate the redemption from Egypt, as Shabbos is a time of daas, and on Shabbos we reflect on the original daas that HaShem bestowed upon us.

Shabbos in the Zemiros

Askinu Seudasa

Composed by the Arizal, Rabbi Yitzchak Luria

Twelve loaves for the Twelve Tribes of Israel Shichinta tisatar bishis nahamei listar bivavin tiskatar vizinin dichnishin, may the Shechinah become a crown through the six loaves on each side through the doubled-six may our table be bound with the profound Temple services. This passage refers to the twelve loaves of the lechem hapanim, the Show-Bread, which were placed on the Shulchan, the Table, in the Bais HaMikdash. According to Kabbala, one should set his Shabbos table with twelve loaves, similar to the arrangement in the Bais HaMikdash. It is noteworthy that we declare that through this arrangement, the Shechinah, the Divine Presence, will be a crowning presence at our Shabbos table. Perhaps the idea expressed here is that the Jewish People consist of twelve tribes and by having twelve loaves on the Shabbos table, we are demonstrating that we wish HaShem to be our King when all of our nation will be unified as one.

Shabbos in Tefillah

The Greatness and Glory of HaShem

Shevach yikar ugedulah vichavod yitnu laKel melech yotzeir kol, praise, honor, greatness and glory let them render to G-d, the King Who fashioned everything. What is the meaning of these four expressions of praise? We have explained previously that the word shevach, praise, and the word sheva, seven, are similar, and the connotation of shevach is abundant praise, as the word sheva, literally translated as seven, also means abundance. Yikar and gedulah are always associated, as it is said (Esther 6:3) vayomer hamelech mah naasah yikar ugedulah liMordechai al zeh, the king said, "what honor or majesty has been done for Mordechai for this?" This expression is appropriate for Shabbos, when we recognize and praise HaShem's Kingship. Kavod, translated as glory, would seem to be the culmination of the above praise, as we find that HaShem is referred to as the melech hakavod, the King of Glory. Shabbos Story

Saved twice

August 9, 2001. A typical day in the center of Jerusalem. The hundreds of shops that line King George Street and Jaffa Road were buzzing with customers. Among them was Martin, an American businessman who had come to Israel for a few days to attend to some business. Martin gave a quick glance at his watch. He had missed breakfast at the hotel, and now that lunchtime was approaching,

his stomach began to rumble. Maybe he could grab a quick bite before his next appointment. Seeing a religious-looking man, Martin stopped him and asked if he knew of a kosher restaurant in the vicinity. The man pointed to the Sbarro restaurant just a few doors away. Martin's initial relief was replaced by disappointment as soon as he entered and saw the long line reaching from the food counter almost to the glass doors.

Reluctantly, Martin took his place in line, checking his watch nervously every so often and wondering if he would be on time for his appointment. An older man standing in front of Martin noticed his impatience, and turning to him with a smile, said, "You look like you're in a hurry. It will take at least a half-hour to get to the counter. If you like, I'll keep your place in line, and meanwhile you can go and take care of whatever it is you have to do."

"Really, you don't mind?" Martin clearly sounded relieved. Looking out the window of the restaurant he could see the tall building on Jaffa Road where he was expected in a few minutes. After a quick mental calculation, he realized the timing was perfect for him. He would go and settle his business quickly, and then he would be free to eat a leisurely lunch. Martin thanked the man in front of him and ran out of the restaurant. As the pedestrian traffic light was green, he crossed the street and made his way to the nearby office building, mentally ticking off all the things he still had to do that day. As he approached the building, without warning, he felt a huge shock wave and his ears rang from a deafening explosion. In the panic and confusion, Martin took cover in the nearest shop. There was a long moment of silence and then - pandemonium. The wails of countless sirens from ambulances, police and rescue units could be heard, and people from all directions began running in the direction from which Martin had come. The air was permeated with an overpowering scorched odor, and thick black smoke spread overhead.

Frightened and confused, Martin ran together with all the others. At first he did not understand what was going on, especially since everyone spoke in rapid-fire Hebrew. But after a minute or two, he caught one word that seemed to repeat itself over and over again: Sbarro. The awareness hit Martin like a flash of lightning. That was the name of the restaurant he had just left. He would still have been standing there when the explosion occurred if not for the man who had stood in front of him and saved his place in line. In place of the modern, glass-fronted restaurant, there was only fire, smoke, twisted steel, rubble - and terror victims.

By nature unemotional and self-controlled, Martin broke down and cried, overcome by the tragedy that had just struck and the miracle of his rescue. His cell phone began ringing, but Martin did not even hear it. Everything that had seemed so important just a few minutes ago - his business, his meetings, all that he had to do were now as nothing... He soon became aware of the extent of the tragedy: Nineteen killed -- five from one family -- and seven of them were young children and babies. There were 109 people injured, 12 seriously. Martin felt his heart contract as he envisioned the crowded restaurant before the explosion. Martin wondered what had happened to the man who had been standing in front of him... It suddenly occurred to Martin that he did not know the man's

name, and he only vaguely remembered what he looked like. How would he ever find out what had happened to him under those circumstances? In his characteristically efficient manner, Martin asked the people who were standing near him for the names of the hospitals where the wounded had been taken, and jotted them down in his appointment book. He then hailed a cab and began his search. The scenes that met him at the various emergency rooms were difficult to watch. Victims and their families filled the rooms, and it was hard to make sense of anything.

Making his way from one emergency room bed to another, Martin was shaken to the core. He almost gave up, but was driven by the desire to see the person in whose merit he was standing on his feet and was not one of those hospitalized. Although it was not always possible to get a good look at a victim's face, he was sure that he had not yet found the person he was looking for.

At the third hospital he visited, Martin suddenly found him. The man's head was bandaged and his eyes were closed, but Martin had no doubt that it was he. This was the one who, with his considerate gesture, had saved Martin from certain injury and possible death.

Martin managed to find out that the man's name was Yaakov; he had been seriously wounded and had been taken to the intensive care unit. He had many injuries caused by the nails that had been implanted in the bomb and he was in great pain. He was conscious but couldn't talk.

Martin was thankful that the man who had saved him was alive. Where there is life, he thought, there is always hope. He could not bear the thought of returning to New York without meeting his benefactor and thanking him in person. After hours of waiting, and feeling emotionally fatigued from the day's experiences, Martin decided to return to his hotel and try again the following day.

Early the next morning, he was gratified to hear that Yaakov's condition had stabilized. An hour later, he was allowed into the room to see him. Yaakov lay on his back, attached to tubes and machines, with his eyes open. At first he could not remember anything prior to the explosion, but after some prompting from Martin, he said that he did have a vague recollection of saving a place in line for an American businessman. It hadn't occurred to him that in doing so he had saved his life.

Martin could barely speak. He held Yaakov's hand and said, "Please, Yaakov, ask me for anything you want. I don't know how to repay you. I won't have any peace until I've shown you my appreciation..."

Yaakov spoke with difficulty, and his voice almost inaudible. "I lack for nothing, thank G-d. All I really need is a full recovery, and that depends on the One Above. Return to your family in peace and may we only hear good news from each other."

Yaakov rested for a moment and then continued, "You know, I didn't do anything out of the ordinary. Anyone else would have done the same. Give your appreciation to G-d, not to me."

The monitor indicated that Yaakov was exerting himself too much, and the nurse asked Martin to leave the room. Martin stood up, took out one of his calling cards and placed it on Yaakov's night table. As he left the room he called out, "I left you my address and phone number. Please don't

hesitate to call me if you ever need anything. I give you my word that for as long as we both live, I will do anything I can for you."

Yaakov's son, who had been sitting next to his father, took the card and put it in his pocket. Yaakov closed his eyes and fell asleep. The conversation had left him totally exhausted. Martin said a final goodbye and left the hospital. He, too, felt drained.

The next day, Martin was on a plane headed back to New York... Martin's family received him with great relief and joy. They made a "thanksgiving" meal, and Martin retold the story of his miraculous rescue. Not a day went by without him mentioning Yaakov in his prayers, and he only wished that he had asked for his phone number so that he could check up on his progress. Five weeks later, Martin received a phone call from Israel. It was Yaakov's son. Martin inquired excitedly about Yaakov's health. "We are hoping for the best," Yaakov's son said. "But he needs a complicated operation. The doctors recommend that the operation take place in a certain American hospital that specializes in this kind of surgery. They say that it could also be done in Israel, but the chances are better in the United States.

"At first we didn't even consider the option of taking my father to America. We don't know a soul there and it seemed to be an impossibility. But then I remembered your card and what you said, and I decided to ask your opinion."

Martin could barely restrain himself. "What's the question?" he exclaimed. "Please don't waste any time. Order plane tickets for your father and whoever will be accompanying him. You will be my guests. I'll make all the arrangements for everything. Just fax me all the details and the medical documents, and I will call the hospital here and get in touch with the right doctors. Leave it to me. Just give me your number and call me as soon as you have your tickets. I will be waiting for you at the airport."

From that moment on, Martin was a man with a mission. He put aside or postponed everything and dedicated himself to bringing Yaakov to the United States for surgery. He consulted various medical advisors and made appointments with a surgeon, paying all the costs himself. Since the operation would be performed outside of New York, he arranged accommodation for Yaakov's family close to the hospital. For the first time ever, Martin took time off from his work schedule so that he would be available to help Yaakov and his family. It was the least he could do. A week later Martin sat with Yaakov's family in the waiting room of the prestigious medical center, while Yaakov underwent the complicated surgery that would hopefully repair the damage his system had suffered during the bombing. As he tearfully prayed for Yaakov, nothing was further from his mind than his business and its now empty office, located on the 80th floor of the Twin Towers in Manhattan.

The time was 8:30 in the morning and the date was September 11, 2001. Martin soon realized that once again Yaakov had been sent from on High to save his life.

This incredible story was told to the author by Rabbi Avraham Dov Auerbach, who heard it from a

relative of the people in the story. All names have been changed to protect the privacy of those involved. Reprinted with permission from Innernet [Reprinted with permission from Torah.org]

Shabbos in Navi Shmuel I Chapter 15

Observing Shabbos in its entirety

In this chapter we learn of the famously tragic incident where Shmuel instructed Shmuel by the word of HaShem to annihilate the nation of Amalek, and Shaul killed all the Amalekim except for Agag, the king of Amalek. Additionally, Shaul left alive the sheep and the cattle, and when Shaul was confronted by Shmuel for his misdeed, he defended himself by saying that he had fulfilled the word of HaShem. Shmuel informed Shaul that because of this act he would forfeit his kingship. The Gemara (Yoma 22b) teaches us when Shaul became king he was like a child who had never sinned. Nonetheless, he was held accountable for his actions regarding Amalek. We can learn a profound lesson from this incident. Hashem instructs us regarding His mitzvos and He gives us the capability to fulfill them in their entirety. An example of this is the Day of Shabbos, where we are expected to conduct ourselves for the entire day in a different manner than during the week. Our prayers are different, our meals are different, and our speech and walking is different. It would certainly behoove us to ensure that we do not desecrate this Holy Day by reading literature that is not suitable for Shabbos and by engaging in speech that is not related to HaShem's Holy Day. HaShem should allow us to learn of the significance of Shabbos and to observe its many laws faithfully.

Shabbos in Agadah

Shabbos and Bris Milah join as a powerful force to subdue the Evil Inclination

The Bais Yisroel writes that regarding both Bris milah and Shabbos it is said ledorosam, for their generations. It would appear then that Shabbos aids in shemiras habris, safeguarding the covenant, and both Shabbos and Milah are referred to as an os, a sign. Milah is called a chosam, a seal, as a seal is what alleviates all protests regarding the validity of a document. Shabbos also contains this idea as on Shabbos the Evil Inclination is weakened and the protestors are silenced. This idea is reflected in the prayer of kegavna, where we recite the words umarei didina kulhu arkin viisabru minah, all wrathful dominions and bearers of grievances fall together. Shabbos has the power for one to overcome his Evil Inclination and this leads to shemiras habris.

Shabbos in Halacha

Pots removed from the blech on Shabbos

If there is a real need, i.e. a pot of essential food, one is allowed to return, bidieved, even if the last two conditions (still in the hand and intent to return) are not followed. Thus, if one removed a pot of essential food from the blech on Shabbos and his intent was not to return it and he set it down, he would be allowed to return the pot to the blech. As mentioned previously, one can only rely on these leniencies if the first three conditions (blech, completely cooked food, still warm) exist.

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