

# AVRAHAM AND ERADICATION OF EVIL

*by Rabbi Binyomin Adler*

## Introduction

This week's parashah contains a theme that appears to run throughout the entire parashah. The Torah commences this week with the incident where Avraham has just been circumcised and despite his pain, he invites three strangers to partake in a sumptuous meal. Avraham himself waits on his guests and he is then informed that he and his wife Sarah will be having a child. The guests, who are angels in disguise, then depart to destroy the city of Sodom and its surroundings.

## Praying for the wicked people of Sodom

HaShem informs Avraham of the tragic state of affairs in Sodom, and Avraham prays to HaShem to spare the cities in the merit of the righteous. Hashem informs Avraham that there are no righteous people in all the cities and Avraham desists from praying further. The angels then enter Sodom where they are greeted by Lot who invites them into his house. The residents of Sodom are not pleased with this act of hospitality and they attempt to harm the visitors. HaShem causes the citizens of Sodom to become blind and the angels then proceed to escort Lot and his remaining family out of the city. HaShem then destroys Sodom and its environs and Lot escapes with his two daughters. Lot and his daughters then engage in an illicit relationship, and the union bears the two forerunners of the Ammonite and Moabite nations. The Torah then records how Avraham settles in the Philistine city of Gerar and the king of Gerar, Avimelech, abducts Sarah. Hashem then punishes Avimelech and his household by restraining their orifices.

Yishmael is banished and Avraham and Yitzchak are tested by Hashem. The Torah then relates how Sarah gave birth to Yitzchak and subsequent to Yitzchak's birth, Sarah demands that Avraham banish Yishmael and his mother because of Yishmael's evil ways. Following this incident we learn how Avraham makes a treaty with Avimelech, and then the Torah relates the spellbinding incident where HaShem instructs Avraham to offer his cherished son Yitzchak as a sacrifice. HaShem then sends an angel to repeal this commandment and Avraham slaughters a ram in Yitzchak's stead.

## The negation of evil

The theme that we see running through this parashah is what is referred to as bittul hara, negation of evil. Circumcision is essentially a negation of the Evil Inclination and the materialism represented within. Sodom was the epitome of evil, and Avraham apparently desired, in the words of the Gemara (Brachos 10a), yitamu chataim vilo chotim, let the sins cease but not the sinners. Lot acted in a self-

defeating manner, bringing shame upon himself and his future generations. Similarly, Avimelech encountered Avraham and Sarah, righteous people, and HaShem punished him harshly. Yishmael was banished from the home of the righteous, and Avraham and Yitzchak were tested in an unprecedented manner. This test, in a sense, was the expiation of any doubt in their minds that they could have possibly had regarding HaShem's Oneness and His dominion over the entire world.

### The Shabbos connection

In the prayer of kegavna that is recited by Nusach Sefard on Friday night, we recite the words kad ayil Shabbsa ihi isyachadas viisparashas misitra achara vichol dinin misabrin minah, when the Shabbos arrives, she unified herself in Oneness and divests herself of the Other Side, [any trace of evil] all harsh judgments are removed from her. Thus, the purpose of creation is that the Jewish People divest itself of all evil and harsh judgments. It is incumbent upon us to recognize that every moment of our lives is a test to choose between good and evil, and when we are victorious, we merit the holiness and exaltedness of Shabbos. HaShem should allow us to be victorious in this world and to merit a portion in the World to Come, when it will be a day that will be completely a Shabbos and a rest day for eternal life. Shabbos in the Zemiros

Askinu Seudasa Composed by the Arizal, Rabbi Yitzchak Luria

### Shabbos suspends all evil forces

Shevisin ushivikin misaavin dirichikin chavilin dimikin vichol zinei chavushin, suspended and relinquished be the distant abominations the afflicting destroyers of all forms of prisoners. Here again we see the theme of Shabbos being a time when all the forces of evil are suspended and relinquished. It appears as if the entire world is imprisoned until the Holy Shabbos arrives and release the world from bondage. When Shabbos arrives the Jewish People are then bathed in the light that existed by the creation of the world.

### Shabbos in Tefillah

Shabbos in this world emanates from Shabbos in the World to Come Hamanchil menuchah liamo Yisroel bikdushaso biyom Shabbos kodesh, Who gives a heritage of contentment to His People, Israel, in His holiness on the holy Shabbos day. Why do we say that HaShem gives contentment as a heritage? Contentment is not tangible, so how can one inherit it? The Tiferes Shlomo (Bereishis) writes that the meaning of this passage is that HaShem gives a heritage of contentment in this world from what will be in the future, in the World to Come. Thus, the words biyom Shabbos kodesh that we recite does not necessarily refer to Shabbos in this world. Rather, it refers to the light and holiness of Shabbos in the World to Come.

### Shabbos Story

Rav Aharon Kotler's Father The Fur Merchant

HaGaon Rav Aharon Kotler told over a story about his father's mesirus nefesh for Torah. His father was a fur merchant in Lita. At a certain period, his business dwindled, and it reached a point where his family was lacking food to sustain themselves.

Every day after Shacharis, his father would learn for two hours, and was mapkid on this learning period his entire life. One day, a wealthy merchant knocked on the door of the Kotler family, and informed them that he would like to buy a sizable amount of furs. However, it was the set learning time of Rav Kotler. His wife knocked on the door of his room, once, twice, and three times, and urged her husband to utilize this opportunity for his business.

Rav Kotler answered from behind the door, "Go tell him that if he's willing to wait until I finish my learning, good! If not - he should go in peace. A person's mezonos is set from Rosh HaShanah until Rosh HaShanah. If it was decreed that I will sell the merchandise, I'll find a buyer!"

Rav Aharon concluded his story, "My father's wondrous mesiras nefesh for Torah instilled in us the emunah peshutah, âWhen you learn Torah, you never lose out!" All of my mesiras nefesh for Torah - I acquired from him!" (Tuvcha Yabiyu)

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### True humility

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky writes: Rabbi Dovid Koppleman tells the story of Rabbi Abish, the Rav of Frankfurt who was known for his extraordinary humility. In addition, he would often raise funds for the needy families of his city. Once he heard that a wealthy man was on business in town and went to the man's hotel suite to ask him for a donation. The tycoon was arrogant and assumed that the Rav was a poor shnorrer, and after a few moments drove him out of his room. A few minutes later the man went to leave his suite and looked for his silver cane. Noticing it was gone, he immediately suspected that Reb Abish took it during his brief visit.

Quickly, the man bolted toward the lobby of the hotel where he accosted Reb Abish. "Thief," the man shouted while pushing the Rav, "give me back my cane!" Reb Abish calmly pleaded. "I did not steal your cane. Please do not accuse me! Please believe me. I did not steal your cane!"

The man was adamant in his arrogance and began to beat the Rav while onlookers recoiled in horror. Reb Abish, despite the pain, remained steadfast in his humble demeanor. "Please believe me. I did not steal your cane!" Finally, the man realized he was getting nowhere and left Reb Abish in disgust.

That Saturday was Shabbos Shuva. The entire community, including the wealthy visitor, packed Frankfurt's main synagogue for the traditional Shabbos Shuva Speech. Horror gripped the visitor as a familiar looking figure rose to the podium and mesmerized the vast audience with an eloquent oration. It was the very shnorrer he had accosted in the hotel! As soon as the speech ended, the man

pushed his way toward the podium and in a tearful voice tried to attract the Rabbi's attention. He was about to plead forgiveness for his terrible behavior when Reb Abish noticed the man.

In all sincerity Reb Abish began to softly plead with him. "I beg of you! Please do not hit me. I truly did not steal your cane." [Reprinted with permission from Torah.org] Shabbos in Navi Shmuel I Chapter 16

### Observing Shabbos in its entirety

In this chapter we learn how HaShem instructed Shmuel to appoint Dovid as a king over the Jewish People. Upon being anointed as king, a spirit of HaShem rested upon Dovid. Subsequently, the spirit of HaShem departed from Shaul, and he was tormented by a spirit of melancholy. Shaul then had Dovid brought before him and when Dovid would play his harp, Shaul was relieved and he felt well, and the spirit of melancholy would depart from him. This incident in Scripture is parallel to Shabbos. The entire week we are engaged in the struggle with the forces of evil, and when Shabbos arrives, all melancholy and sadness departs. We should use the holiness of Shabbos to lift our spirits even during the week, as one can only serve HaShem with joy.

### Shabbos in Agadah

#### Teshuvah fills the gap of Shabbos

The Medrash (Koheles Rabbah 1:3) states that Shlomo HaMelech writes the word hevel, vanity, seven times, and each word hevel corresponds to a day of creation. This is because for every day Shlomo saw that there was a lack. Regarding Shabbos it is said (Shemos 31:14) *michalileha mos yumas*, its desecrators shall be put to death. This verse reflects the idea that even Shabbos has a lack, as because of its great holiness and the stringencies inherent in Shabbos, one who transgresses the Shabbos is punished. The Bais HaLevi (Bereishis) writes that this is only said if there was no concept of repentance. The Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah 22:13), however, states that Kayin demonstrated to his father, Adam, that repentance is effective, and Adam then declared (Tehillim 92:1) *mizmor shir liyom haShabbos*, a psalm, a song for the Shabbos day. Thus, Shabbos is not lacking and it is complete good. It is for this reason that the Gemara (Shabbos 118b) states that one who observes Shabbos properly will gain atonement for his sins, even if he had worshipped idols like the Generation of Enosh. One who observes Shabbos merits having his repentance accepted and he thus gains atonement for his sins.

### Shabbos in Halacha

#### If the fire is extinguished

If one left fully cooked food on a blech and the fire underneath the food went out accidentally, one can transfer the food to another blech, as long as the food is still warm. Even if the flame went out before Shabbos and one did not notice until Shabbos began, he can transfer the fully cooked food while it is still warm.

## Shabbos Challenge Question

Last week we posed the question: what does it mean that the time of Mincha on Shabbos is raava diraavin, a time of great will? The Sfas Emes (Lech Lecho 5635) writes that every Jew has a desire to come close to HaShem, and even one who does not have the proper desire has the desire to arrive at the true desire. In a similar vein, HaShem desires the Jewish People. Even if the Jewish People are not worthy, HaShem still desires to favor us. This, writes the Sfas Emes, is the meaning of raava diraavin, "the will of wills." This means that at mincha on Shabbos, HaShem accepts the desire of even a simple Jew who desires to attain the desire to be close to HaShem.

This week's question is, why we refer to the extra soul on Shabbos as a neshama yeseira and not a second soul. If you have a possible answer, please email me at [ShabbosTaamHachaim@gmail.com](mailto:ShabbosTaamHachaim@gmail.com) and your answer will be posted in next week's edition of Shabbos: Ta'am HaChaim.

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