



## *Akeidas Yitzchak: A Test of Contradictions*

*By Moti Schreck, 10th Grade*

In Parshas Vayeira, we read about the famous incident of Akeidas Yitzchak. Here, Hashem commands Avraham to take his son Yitzchak and schect him as a Korban. All the Meforshim go to great lengths to try to interpret this perplexing story. Throughout Tanach, child sacrifices are viewed as some of the most evil sins. How can it be that Hashem was testing Avraham to sacrifice his own son?! Wouldn't this make Avraham no better than the evil kings throughout Tanach who sacrifice children? Furthermore, the name "Avram" means "mighty father." Avraham was meant to be a symbolic role model for all fathers. Certainly, a model father does not sacrifice his own son!

Most Meforshim give explanations along the same lines. That is, that by Avraham willing to sacrifice Yitzchak, he demonstrated that he loved Hashem more than his own son, thus passing Hashem's test. However, the question still stands. The point of the test could not have been to see if Avraham was willing to sacrifice his son, since human sacrifices were indeed fairly common in ancient times. Why was this considered so courageous then? It was not unheard of to do such a thing, and therefore this huge test Avraham passed must have been something else.

Throughout Avraham's life before the Akeida, a pattern develops. Hashem made promises, and they appear to be unfulfilled. Hashem promises Avraham the land, yet he owned not even one burial plot for Sarah. Hashem tells Avraham to go to a foreign land where He will make him into a great nation and bless him, and

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## *The Importance of Tests*

*By Yehuda Goller, 10th Grade*

The life of Abraham, the first Jew, seems to be a series of tests. The Mishnah in Pirkei Avot says that, "With ten tests our father Abraham was tested, and he withstood them all" (5:3). His biggest test came in this week's Parsha with the almost offering of Isaac. The Torah says, "And it came to pass after these things, that G-d tested Abraham, and He said to him, 'Abraham,' and he said, 'Here I am.' And He said, 'Please take your son, your only one, whom you love, Isaac, and go away to the land of Moriah and bring him up there for a burnt offering on one of the mountains, of which I will tell you'" (Genesis 22:1-2). This brings up an obvious question: After all the previous hardships, like just picking up and moving to a land foreign to him, why does Abraham need to be tested? Not only that, but even if there was a need for a test, what is the purpose of giving a test even harder than before?

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a test as "a series of questions or exercises for measuring the skill, knowledge, intelligence, capacities, or aptitudes of an individual or group," or "a procedure, reaction, or reagent used to identify or characterize a substance or constituent." This begs a more fundamental question. If testing is a means to find out more about someone or something, and G-d of course knows everything, why did Abraham

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**Torah Teasers**

By Rabbi Moshe Erlbaum, 9th Grade Rebbe

**Questions**

1. Where is butter mentioned in this parsha? In what context is butter mentioned in the Prophets?
2. In this parsha, which two people question Hashem about killing a *tzaddik* (righteous person)?
3. In this parsha, which two people make a *Mishte* - "a feast"?
4. Where is salt mentioned in this parsha? When is the next time that salt is mentioned in the Torah?
5. Aside from the book of Genesis, where else do the cities of Sodom and Amora appear in the Torah?
6. Which two people give the same exact gifts to each other?

**Answers**

1. Avraham serves butter to the angels (Genesis 18:8). In the book of Judges, Yael serves butter to Sisra (Shoftim 5:25).
2. Avraham asks Hashem if He will kill the *tzaddikim* of Sodom (Genesis 18:25). Avimelech also asks Hashem if He will kill a *tzaddik* (referring to himself for not touching Sarah) (Genesis 20:4).
3. Lot makes a feast for the angels (Genesis 19:3), and Avraham makes a feast when Yitzhak is weaned (21:8).
4. Lot's wife turns around and becomes "a pillar of salt" (Genesis 19:26). Salt is not mentioned again until Leviticus 2:13 with regard to the salt required for *korbonot*.
5. The song in Parshat Ha'azinu mentions Sodom and Amora (Deut. 32:32).
6. When Avimelech returns Sarah, he gives to Avraham sheep and cattle (Genesis 20:14). Later in the parsha when the two make a treaty, Avraham gives Avimelech the same gift of sheep and cattle (Genesis 21:27).

“When all you do is win, losing will feel like a tuna sandwich left out in the sun.”

- David Nisanov, DRS GO President

**ALIYAH SUMMARY**

**1st Aliyah** - Hashem visits Avraham after he is given a Bris Milah. Avraham sees three travelers and he invites them in with incredible hospitality. He and Sarah prepare a lavish meal for them and afterwards these travelers reveal themselves to be Malachim who tell them that Sarah will have a son in one year's time. Sarah laughs at this news and Hashem expresses His displeasure with her for laughing.

**2nd Aliyah** - The Malachim head to the five cities of Sedom in order to destroy them and save Lot from Sedom. Hashem tells Avraham about His plans to destroy Sedom and Avraham tries to save Sedom by bargaining with Hashem. Unfortunately, Avraham's bargaining fails and we will see in the next couple of Aliyos how Sedom does in fact get destroyed.

**3rd Aliyah** - The Malachim come to Sedom and Lot invites them to his home. The people of Sedom become so enraged with an act of Chesed occurring in their city that they surround the house and try to harm the guests. As the people of Sedom try to break into the house, the angels strike the people with blindness. The Malachim then tell Lot that Sedom is to be destroyed. They encourage him to run away. Lot, his wife, and his two daughters leave the city and are told not to look back.

**4th Aliyah** - Hashem destroys Sedom. In the midst of fleeing the city, Lot's wife looks back and is transformed into a pillar of salt. Lot and his daughters take shelter in a cave and, thinking that the entire world was destroyed, Lot's daughters intoxicate their father, seduce him, and eventually each give birth to a son. They were the forefathers of Amon and Moav. The Aliyah continues with Avraham moving to Garar which belonged to the Plishtim. Avimelech, the Melech Plishtim, takes Sarah because he thought that she was Avraham's sister. Hashem appears to Avimelech in a dream and tells him that he must return Sarah to her husband. Avimelech does so and gives them both many gifts in addition. At the end of the Aliyah we hear about the birth of Yitzchak, who receives a Bris when he is eight days old.

**5th Aliyah** - In this Aliyah we see that Yitzchak grows up. Sarah sees that Yishmael is a negative influence on Yitzchak, and Sarah tells Avraham to expel Yishmael and Hagar from their home. Avraham is reluctant to do so but Hashem tells him to listen to everything that Sarah says. The Aliyah continues with Hagar and Yishmael wandering in the desert. Eventually, an angel shows a well to Hagar, thus enabling the pair to survive.

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# 10-Minute Halacha Shiur

Given by *Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz*  
on [yutorah.org](http://yutorah.org)

Transcribed by  
*Ari Keller*

## Bikur Cholim

There are three Mitzvos that one can be Yotzei while doing the Mitzvah of Bikur Cholim. They are “Ve'ahavta Lareyacha Kamocho” (being nice to your fellow Jew), “Lo Saamod Al Dam Reyecha” (visiting a very ill friend can leave such an impression that it may actually save them), and “Hashavas Hanefesh” (bringing them back to life).

The Gemarah in Sotah darshins from the Pasuk of “V'Halachta B'drachav”, following in Hashem’s ways, that a person should be involved in Bikur Cholim. The Gemarah says that we have to emulate Hashem’s ways, and if Hashem did Bikur Cholim by Avraham Avinu in this week's Parsha, we must visit the sick as well.

The Rambam says that although this Mitzvah is Dirabanan, its Kiyum is Dioraysa. So why is there no Bracha on the Mitzvah of Bikur Cholim? One answer could be that there is no real Zman for the Mitzvah - it is continuous. Another reason is that we don’t make Brachos on sad things, and because this Mitzvah usually involves unfortunate situations, we don’t make a Bracha on it. A third reason can be that we are worried that the Choleh will turn you down and say that he doesn’t want visitors anymore, so we wouldn’t make a Bracha on this. Lastly, we wouldn’t want to make Brachos on things that the Umos Ha’Olam do, and because they also visit their sick, we don’t make a Bracha on this Mitzvah.

The Mitzvah of Bikur Cholim is three-pronged in terms of its purpose. Firstly, when you visit the Choleh, you're supposed to be lifting the person’s spirits and making him feel good. The second element of Bikur Cholim is to provide physical support and to fulfill his wishes, such as bringing him his favorite food. The third element is the element of Tefillah. The Gemarah says that if you were Mivaker a Choleh but were not Mispalel, you were not Mikayaim the Mitzvah of Bikur Cholim properly. Obviously, one should not be Mispalel directly in front of the Choleh. The Shulchan Aruch also says that one should not be Mivaker too early in the morning, because the Choleh will look stronger and it will negatively affect your tefilos. On the other hand, the Shulchan Aruch says that one should not come too late in the day, because the Choleh will look worse than he is and again it would negatively impact his Tefilos because he will think the Choleh is a lost cause. Because there are three elements to this Mitzvah, one can be Mikayim one element with the others and it’s still a partial Kiyum.



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# SPARKS OF CHASSIDUS



*With Jared  
Mark*

Struggle, battle, distress: All things experienced by most in everyday lives. Although when we look up at our elders, leaders, and ancestors, it's seemingly not so common. These people have accomplished such great things that it doesn't really seem possible for them to deal with these issues.

However, these ideas couldn't be further from the truth. To truly develop our point let's take a look at who some would call our greatest of ancestors, Avraham Avinu. When we take a look at this week's Parsha, on the surface, all we see is Avraham's success of passing test after test and challenge after challenge without fail or hesitation. But as we take a closer look and the struggles become clear. Just to start, we see while Avraham is deciding what to do with Yishmael (Bereishis 21:11) "The matter distressed Abraham greatly, for it concerned a son of his." While Avraham knew he had Hashem to turn to, and Hashem clearly does help Avraham by giving him advice, in the end, we still see Avraham having some distress over the prospect that he would have to send away his son.

Next, we can take a look at one of the most famous scenes in all of Jewish history, Akeidas Yitzchak. One might think that the prospect of sacrificing a son would be the most stressful and nervous days in their entire lives. Avraham, at least on the surface, seems calm, cool, and collected on the whole way up to the mountain. However, as we dig deeper into Avraham Avinu, we do see some signs of distress. On their walk up to the mountain it's very interesting as we see what seems like Avraham lying to Yitzchak when he tells him "G-d will see to the sheep for His burnt offering, my son", (22:8) when really it was Yitzchak to be sacrificed. (22:8) As clearly Avraham knew the truth all along, he did not relay this to Yitzchak. Despite this episode's happy ending, it serves as another example of how stress and struggle can even affect someone as great as Avraham.

Now that we have established the humanness of our awesome forefather we can now see the beauty of his struggle. Most people would think these struggles would diminish Avraham's image, but that is truly not the case. These struggles are not just not bad; they are an integral part of who Avraham is. They are the reason Avraham Avinu is "Avinu". We can further see this the great Rav Yitzchak Hutner zt"l's interpretation of Shlomo Hamelech's famous words: "Seven times the righteous person will fall and then arise." Rav Hutner zt"l explains that the phrase doesn't mean that despite the fact that he struggled he was still a Tzadik; rather it means that only because of his struggles did he become a Tzadik.

This is just one more amazing lesson we can learn from our great forefather Avraham Avinu. When anyone has a struggle or a battle with anything in their life, the natural reaction is to be down and disheartened by this. Now we can learn from Avraham not to be down but rather to be excited! To use those struggles for the good, to grow from them, and to allow them to make us a Tzadik. Using this, hopefully we can all become Tzadikim and bring the ultimate Tzadik in Moshiach B'Mheira B'Yamainu!



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*Men and Angels*  
*By: Nathaniel Danesh, 9th Grade*

When the three angels went to visit Avraham, the Torah describes them as anashim (men), which seems to be a fit description. However, when describing them as they later visit Lot, the Torah refers to them as angels. Aren't these the same people? Why the difference in the language used by the Torah?

The discrepancy in the description of these people reveals a very important character trait in Avraham, namely, that he would welcome anyone into his house, whether ordinary men or holy angels.

Let's use a mashal to explain this: There was once a king who wanted to experience life and the people in his kingdom beyond the confined area of his palace. So, he ventured into the heart of the city and asked the head of the city for a place to stay the night. Now, mind you, the king traveled without his horses and chariots and therefore appeared to be a regular person. Observing the man in front of him and obviously being unimpressed, the head refused the king's request, forcing the king to take up residence somewhere else. Fast forward a few years, and the king is back in town, but this time with his entourage of horses and chariots. The head of city, being in a position of prominence, figured that he would have the great honor of hosting the king. So, he must have been flabbergasted when the king instead opted to sleep in the house of a seemingly innocuous resident. However, unbeknownst to the head, that resident was in fact the fine fellow who had graciously hosted the king years prior.

This mashal exemplifies the crucial life lesson of treating everyone like they're the king, whether or not they actually are. We're equally commanded in the mitzvah of hachnasat orchim with ordinary men and holy people. Having this perspective of impartiality is an incredibly difficult thing to do, which is what makes Avraham's ability to do it even more extraordinary.

We should all one day be zocheh to do the mitzvah of hachnasat orchim just like Avraham, remaining impartial in the level of hospitality we extend towards others.

*(Schreck-Continued from page 1)*

there was a famine immediately upon Avraham's arrival. The lesson Hashem is teaching Avraham is that fulfillment does not immediately follow promise; rather, there is a long and challenging journey in between. This does not mean that the promises have become void; Hashem keeps all his promises. However, Avraham was learning that while matters may not make seem to make sense at first, you must keep on going.

This pattern reaches its climax when Hashem commands Avraham, "Take your son, your only son, the son that you love – Yitzchak – and offer him up." This follows soon after Hashem talks about how Avraham will become a great nation: he will be like the stars, and so on. Yishmael was already out of the picture, so seemingly the promises were meant to come through Yitzchak. And now, Hashem tells Avraham to take Yitzchak and schecht him. This test was not to see if Avraham would merely schecht his son. Rather, it was to see if despite the apparent contradictions between Hashem's word now, and everything He said before, Avraham could keep moving forward.

Chazal teaches us that when two pesukim seem to contradict each other, we must wait for a third pasuk to resolve the contradiction. This was the exact situation Avraham was living in. On one hand, he is told that he will be this great nation. On the other hand, though, he is told to destroy the only way this promise can be fulfilled. The test was to see if Avraham could live with uncertainty, and proceed without that 'third pasuk'. Avraham passed this test and walked straight through this contradiction. Of course, he was utterly confused, but that did not stop him from proceeding to follow the instruction of Hashem and bringing Yitzchak up.

Avraham is teaching us a very important lesson: the ultimate faith one can have is not certainty, rather the courage to live with uncertainty. Avraham knew that Hashem's promises would come true, he just didn't understand how or when. Avraham, however, was fine with that. He did not need clarity to proceed with Hashem's word; he trusted the Ribono Shel Olam. May we all learn from Avraham to trust in Hakadosh Baruch Hu and be able to see the coming of Mashiach.

Adapted from Rabbisaks.org



*(Goller- Continued from page 1)*

even need to get tested in the first place?

The answer lies within multiple meanings of the Hebrew word nes, the root of the word nisayon, one of the Hebrew words for “test”. Nes can mean a banner as it says in Isaiah, “I will raise my banner” (49:22). So a test may include more than finding more out about the person’s character but it can also be a way of displaying a person’s character which may be what G-d was doing; He was almost showing off Abraham’s trust and belief in Him. Nes, more famously, also means a miracle. How could there be a connection between a test (nisayon) and a miracle(nes)?

A nisayon-type test doesn’t show a person’s current ability; rather, the purpose of a nisayon test is to see if the test itself could propel the person being tested to grow beyond his or her natural ability. The test offers an opportunity for the person to perform a “miracle” and to grow into something better and greater. The test of Abraham was not merely a nisayon-type “test” to measure his commitment to G-d, or to demonstrate his commitment to G-d to the world (“raising a banner”). The nisayon, most importantly, allowed Abraham to perform a miracle (nes) to improve upon himself and become something he never thought possible.

According to Kabbalah, our descent to this world from heaven is a test for our souls. G-d wants to test the strength of our connection to him, show that connection to everyone else, and help us realize that through the hardships of Earth we have the chance to grow spiritually, exponentially, and seemingly miraculously. Good Shabbos!

Adapted from Chabad.org

*(Aliyah Summary - Continued from page 2)*

Yishmael continues to live in the desert, and eventually gets married there.

**6th Aliyah** - Avimelech requests that he and Avraham form a pact, and Avraham agrees that they will not harm each other. However, Avraham is angry that Avimelech’s servants stole a well that he had personally dug. Avraham sets apart seven sheep as a testimony that he had in fact dug the well, not Avimelech. He then plants an orchard and establishes an inn in Be’er Sheva, proclaiming the name of Hashem to anyone who enters.

**7th Aliyah** - This is the Aliyah where Akaidas Yitzchak takes place. Avraham was prepared to kill his own son because Hashem said to do so. At the very last minute a Malach calls out to him to refrain from killing Yitzchak. Avraham is shown a ram in a nearby bush that he is told to take as a Korban instead of his son. Hashem promises Avraham great blessings as a reward for passing this difficult test. After these events, our Aliyah ends with Avraham Aveinu being notified that his sister in law had given birth to children. One of these children, Bituel, is going to be the father of Rivka, the future wife of Yitzchak.

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Rabbi M. Erlbaum**RETURNING ANGELS****MOSHE GERSTLEY****9TH GRADE**

At the beginning of Parshat Vayeira, one of the Malachim tells Avraham, "I will return to you next year, and your wife Sarah will have a son". What does the Malach mean when he says "Shov Ashuv Eilecha - I will return to you"? If you look through the pesukim, you won't find anything about the malach returning to Avraham the next year. What does this "returning" refer to?

Rabeinu Bachaya offers a simple explanation and explains that he doesn't mean that he will literally return to him, but rather that his words will come to fruition in one year's time which is as if he will return to him.

The Pardes Hagadol offers an alternative explanation. He explains that the Malach didn't return the next year; his words came true the next year. But he does return years later by the Akeidah. This is the same malach who calls out to Avraham, at the end of the Parshah, to inform him that he should not slaughter his son.

But what is the correlation between these two events? Why is this same malach present at both events? The key connection between these occurrences is the creation and extension of Yitzchak's life. By the Akaidah, Avraham stretched out his hand and took a knife to slaughter his son Yitzchak. At that exact moment, the Malach called to him saying, "Stop, do not do anything." Yitzchak's life could have ended right then and there, but the Malach returned to stop Yitzchak's death, and by doing so he extended his life. Thirty seven years earlier, that same malach informed Avraham that he would bring a child into the world. This time around he was coming to give Yitzchak life. The two are connected because they are crucial points in Yitzchak's life cycle. Both are the times that the Malach, a messenger of Hashem, extended his efforts to begin and preserve life.

Have a great Shabbos!

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