



Saving Sodom

By Jacob Penstein, 12th Grade

One of the most inordinately selfless acts to occur in the Torah appears in the week's parsha: Avraham's prayers on behalf of Sodom. After Hashem shares with Avraham that He will destroy the city of Sodom and the neighboring villages, Avraham immediately begins to petition Hashem to save them. Avraham attempts to bargain with Hashem, asking God to save the cities because of the potential righteous people living there. Understanding that there are not even ten righteous men in all of the cities destined to be destroyed, Avraham ends his pleas.

On the surface, Avraham's prayers offer us a very important lesson. We have an obligation to only care about everyone around us, even for people who we might think are not deserving of it. Remember, Avraham is praying for a city containing the most wicked people in the world. While the fact that Avraham attempts to intercede for the sake of such a God forsaken people is incredible, the language of the prayer is quite strange. Why does Avraham specifically ask God to save the cities on behalf of ten righteous men who might dwell there? Why doesn't he just ask God to save them because they are fellow men or for Avraham's own sake? What is the significance of the nonexistent upright citizens of Sodom?

After examining Avraham's prayers, one must conclude that Hashem did-

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Displaying Your True Character

By Jackie Glaser, Director of Production, 12th Grade

In this week's Parsha, we see two important stories that are both very similar and very different. In the first story, Avraham, recuperating from his recent circumcision, prepares a lavish welcoming feast on a mercilessly hot day for three dust-covered travelers who happen to pass by his home. Later on, these same travelers – who were actually angels in disguise – continue on to Sedom, where they will destroy the city in divine retribution for the moral atrocities of its people. In Sedom, the travelers are welcomed by Lot, Avraham's nephew, who invites them into his home. The people of Sedom, who are philosophically opposed to hospitality, are enraged, and Lot risks his life to defend his guests. Although Lot's hospitality was apparently more important to him than life itself, we are never told to look upon Lot as a shining example of a kind and hospitable person. Avraham, who did not risk his life, is our role model on how to be a good host, not Lot. Why is this so?

Let us take a closer look at this man Lot, a man so devoted to kindness and hospitality that he is ready to defy all his neighbors in Sedom. How could a man of such high principles choose to live such a low city like Sedom? This is what defines Lot as a person. Lot had spent many years in the house of his uncle Avraham. He had seen Avraham's way of life, his outstanding kindness, his outstanding hospitality, his purity of character, and he had seen

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Torah Teasers

By Rabbi Moshe Erlbaum, 9th Grade
Rebbe

Parshas Vayeira**Questions**

1. In this parsha, which two people make a Mishteh - "a feast"?
2. Where is salt mentioned in this parsha? When is the next time that salt is mentioned in the Torah?
3. In this parsha, which two people question Hashem about killing a tzaddik (righteous person)?
4. Which two people give the same exact gifts to each other?
5. With regard to which events does the Torah state that Avraham "arose early in the morning"? (3 answers) Who else in this parsha arose early in the morning?

Answers

1. Lot makes a feast for the angels (Genesis 19:3), and Avraham makes a feast when Yitzhak is weaned (21:8).
2. 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 korbano.
3. 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).
4. 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).



1st Aliyah - Hashem visits Avraham, so to speak, after Avraham's 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 child, a son, in one year's time despite their advanced ages. Sarah laughs at this news and Hashem expresses His displeasure with her for laughing.

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

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

4th Aliyah - In this Aliyah Hashem destroys Sodom and while fleeing Sodom Lot's wife looks back and she was 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 and seduce him and eventually they 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 and Avimelech, Melech Plishtim, takes Sarah because he thought that she was Avraham's sister. Hashem afflicts the whole palace and Hashem appears to Avimelech in a dream saying that he must return Sarah to her husband. Avimelech does so and he gives them both many gifts and at the end of the Aliyah we hear about the birth of Yitzchak who receives a Bris when he was eight days old.

5th Aliyah - In this Aliyah we hear that Yitzchak grew up and Sarah sees that Yishmael was not a positive influence on Yitzchak and because of this Sarah tells Avraham to expel Yishmael and Hagar from their home. Av-

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Given by Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz
on yutorah.org

Transcribed by
Eli Wiseman

Sacrificing for Chessed

- ⇒ Connection to the Parsha: Avraham invited guests even though he had his circumcision three days earlier and was in tremendous pain.
- ⇒ **Q: How much Chessed does one have to do?**
- ⇒ **A:** The Mishnah in Peah (1:1) has a list of Mitzvot that have no amount. One of them is Gemilut Chasadim, acts of kindness. Either this means there is no limit on how much Chessed one could do, or even the smallest amount of Chessed is Chessed.
- ⇒ The Turay Even in Masechet Chagiga writes that Chessed is determined based on a person's estimation of how much he should do. This is not like the other Mitzvos on the list, such as Talmud Torah, which doing more of is better.
- ⇒ R' Moshe (Teshuva Ibn Ezar Cheslek 4 Siman 24 Os 4) writes that a person has to donate a specific amount of his time for Chessed. He thinks it should be like Tzedaka, where one is obligated to give 10%, and if he wants to go beyond that he may up to 20%. The rest of his time should be spent performing other Mitzvos and studying Torah.
- ⇒ **Q: How much money does one have to give up?**
- ⇒ **A:** In Divine Footsteps, Rav Daniel Feldman says most Mitzvot between man and his fellow don't require one to spend money to perform them.
- ⇒ One example is found in Gemara (Kiddushin) which holds that one doesn't have to spend his own money to honor his parents.
- ⇒ Another example is found in Gemara (Baba Metzia 30) which holds that one doesn't have to lose out on money to perform Hashavas Aveida.
- ⇒ The obvious exception is Tzedaka because the mitzvah is to give money.
- ⇒ The Shulchan Aruch HaRav says one doesn't even have to give up potential profit for Chessed.
- ⇒ In Alenu LiShabayach, Rav Zilberstein writes that maybe a loss of money that one doesn't think about, or a very small amount of money has to be given up.
- ⇒ For example, one is not exempt from driving one home even though the added weight to the car uses more fuel and costs money since one doesn't normally think of that loss of money.
- ⇒ **Q: How much honor does one have to give up?**
- ⇒ **A:** If it would be beneath one's dignity to do an act of kindness, he is exempt.
- ⇒ Rav Shecter gives the example that a Talmid Chacham does not have to return a lost pair of underwear since it would be beneath his dignity and a lack of respect for others.
- ⇒ **Q: Can one perform the act of kindness even though it is beneath his dignity?**
- ⇒ **A1:** The Shulchan Aruch (Choshen Mishpat Siman 263 Sief 3) says one can go beneath his dignity to perform the above Mitzvah.
- ⇒ **A2:** The Rama argues and says one cannot go beneath his dignity. He states that if one wants to go above the law, he should pay the one in need of the Chessed.
- ⇒ **Q: How much personal loss in regards to pain and anguish does one need to sacrifice for Chessed?**
- ⇒ **A:** In a case of Hashavas Aveida, if one is going to suffer more pain with performing the Mitzvah, such as going through the trouble of finding the owner of a lost object than the recipient of the Chessed is going to get, then he is exempt.
- ⇒ **Q: Does one have to give up learning Torah to perform Chessed?**
- ⇒ **A:** The Gemara (Avodah Zarah 17) declares if one learns but doesn't do Chessed, it is as if he doesn't believe in G-D.
- ⇒ **Q: In general, which Mitzvot does one need to sacrifice his learning for?**
- ⇒ **A:** The Gemara (Moed Katan) maintains one who is learning Torah is exempt from Mitzvot that can be done by someone else. However, Mitzvot which only that person can perform, such as putting Tefillin on one's arm (another person can't put on Tefillin for that person), he must stop his learning and perform the Chessed.
- ⇒ **Q: Does one need to stop learning to go to a Levaya?**
- ⇒ **A:** The Gemara (Kesubos) says one should stop learning and go to a Levaya of a Talmud Chacham unless there are 600,000 people there.
- ⇒ However, a Talmud Chacham that taught there is

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SPARKS OF CHASSIDUS



*With Yaakov
Fuchs*

“For now I know that you are G'd fearing, seeing you have not withheld your only son from Me.”

The Kedushas Levi examined the above pasuk and saw that based off of the Pasuk, it would appear that there are two types of yirah (fear) when it comes to Hashem. One type is based on a person's understanding of the meaning of the Mitzvah that he performs (if the Mitzvah makes logical sense). The second type of yirah is shown when one fulfills Mitzvos whose purpose he had not been able to understand. When someone performs Mitzvos without knowing their meaning, his level of fearing Hashem is higher than the person who does so, because he believes that he understands the reason why Hashem has demanded fulfillment of that commandment, and he “agrees” with Hashem. When the latter person observes a Mitzvah, it is not clear that he does so out of Ahavas Hashem, as he may be doing so because he feels he is doing himself a favor, as the Mitzvah is logical, and clearly in everyone's interest! This, of course, is not meant to diminish the holiness of doing a Mitzvah in this fashion, as it is extremely lofty.

Before the Malach said to Avraham: “Do not touch and harm the lad,” people had thought that surely the reason why Avraham set out to do this was because he thought he understood Hashem's reason for issuing such a commandment. After he was now commanded not to proceed, it would be clear to everybody that Avraham had not understood the reason for Hashem's command, as if he had been correct in what he thought, Hashem could not have cancelled the command. What had been a valid consideration could not suddenly have become an invalid consideration! Therefore it had emerged retroactively that when Avraham had begun to carry out Hashem's command to offer Yitzchak as a burnt offering, he had been motivated only by his Ahavas Hashem, and how could he possibly refuse the command given by a G-D Whom he loved? By cancelling His Mitzvah, Hashem showed that there had never been a rationale for such a Mitzvah. The nisayon of Avraham had consisted in his performing even a totally irrational Mitzvah.

The only reason for giving Avraham such a Mitzvah was the Ratzon Hashem to prove that Avraham would not be deterred by the absence of a valid reason for Yitzchak having to die on the Mizbeach. All of this is implied in the Malach saying: “now I have seen, etc.,” it does not mean that Hashem had not known up to now. It means that this was the only way in which Hashem had been able to demonstrate to the world what He had known about Avraham's potential to perform such an act for no other reason than that He loved Hashem.

(Jacob Penstein- Continued from page 1)

n't destroy Sodom because of all the evil it contained; it was destroyed because it lacked the necessary righteous men to save it. This teaches the incredible lesson of a single righteous act. If just a few of the inhabitants of Sodom had performed a few good deeds, God would have saved the whole city, despite the amount of evildoers living there. Each positive action trumps the thousands of sins weighing against it. Similarly, each time we perform a mitzvah, we are creating a force to keep the world going. This is demonstrated by a thought experiment proposed by the Rambam. Each time one is about to perform an action, he should treat it as if it will determine the fate of the world, that this one commandment will tip the balance of the scales. One small mitzvah can save the world, just as one small sin can doom it.

The lesson extends further. Avraham, one of the greatest men to ever live, was not able to save Sodom from his own merits. Avraham could guide, teach, and lead, but he was not able to rescue. He needed someone to prove to God that Sodom can save itself. So too, we must be the ones to “save ourselves.” We cannot rely on others to daven or learn for us. We must take the initiative. Brachot and sparks of inspiration are incredible to Jewish growth, but we must remember that the hard work and effort must come from us. By learning, growing, and performing mitzvot, we not only can save the world, but save ourselves.

Good Shabbos!

The Greatness Of The Akeidah

By: Aaron Nassir

In this week's parsha we read about Avraham's test to sacrifice his son, Yitzchak. R' Moshe Almosnino z"l (16th century) asks in his work, Yedei Moshe: Why is Avraham glorified for his willingness to sacrifice his son? How many thousands of Jews sacrificed themselves for Hashem from ancient times until today?

R' Almosnino answers: Avraham's greatness was that he fulfilled Hashem's command joyfully. How do we know that he did? Because he experienced prophecy in the middle of the akeidah, and Chazal teach that prophecy can be experienced only when the prophet is in a joyful state. Surely one would have expected Avraham to experience sadness as he prepared to sacrifice his son, but Avraham experienced only joy at fulfilling the word of Hashem.

The Chida offers a different answer to the question. He explains that throughout Jewish history, when Jews went to martyrdom, they were forced to do so. Even Avraham, when he entered Nimrod's furnace as a child, was

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(Aliyah Summary- Continued from page 2)

Avraham is reluctant to do so but Hashem tells Avraham that he must listen to his wife Sarah and everything that she says. The Aliyah continues with Hagar and Yishmael wandering in the desert and eventually an angel enables Hagar to see a well and they survive. The Aliyah continues by the Torah telling us that Yishmael lived in the desert, he gets married there and he becomes a skilled archer.

6th Aliyah - In this Aliyah Avimelech requests of Avraham that they enter into a pact. Avraham agrees that they will not harm each other. However, Avraham expresses anger or frustration regarding a well which Avraham had dug and was later stolen by Avimelech's servants. Avraham sets apart seven sheep as a testimony that he Avraham, not Avimelech, had dug the well. Avraham then plants an orchard and establishes an inn in Beer Sheva and he proclaims the name of Hashem to anyone who came there.

7th Aliyah - This is the Aliyah of Akaidas Yitzchak. Avraham excitedly, more than willingly was prepared to kill his own son and at the very last minute a Malach calls out to him to refrain, to not kill his son. Avraham is shown a ram in a nearby bush and that is the Korban instead of his son and 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.

(10 Minute Halacha- Continued from page 3)

no maximum; he must always go

⇒ **Q: Should a person go beyond the exceptions?**

⇒ **A:** Yes, a person, even though he is exempt from the Mitzvah between him and his fellow, should go beyond the exceptions to develop his Tzelem Elokim.

⇒ **Who should be the primary one to receive Chessed?**

⇒ **A:** The order is the same as Tzedeka where one's household is first then relatives and neighbors.

⇒ In Divine Footsteps, Rav Daniel Feldman quotes the Or Hatzufun which says Chessed in the house is the best Chessed because the recipient of the Chessed isn't embarrassed to receive it.

Now I Know That You Are God-Fearing

**By: BZ Scheinman,
10th grade**

“VaYomer Al-Tishlach Yadcha El-HaNaar V’Al-Taas Lo Meumah Ki Atah Yadati Ki-Yireh Elokim Ata.”

One of the most famous, instrumental stories in the entire Torah occurs in this week’s Parsha, the story of Akeidas Yitzchak. We learn in this Parsha that Hashem presented Avraham with ten different tests, the last and most difficult of these tests being the Akeida. Hashem commands Avraham to take his only child and offer him as a Korban to Hashem. Just as Avraham is about to slaughter his son and complete his final test, an angel calls out to Avraham with a message from Hashem, saying that he should not in fact go through with the Schechting of Yitzchak. In this Pasuk, Hashem explains to Avraham that there is no need to go through with the act of offering Yitzchak, and “Atah Yadati,” now I, Hashem, know that you, Avraham, are a truly God-fearing person.

The Vilna Gaon asks an interesting question on these words. What does Hashem mean when He says “Now I know”? Did Hashem only just realize that Avraham was a Tzadik? How could that be? Up until this point, Avraham had already passed all nine of the tests he had taken. We have already had countless stories in just a few short Parshios about what a Tzadik Avraham was. How could it be that only now, after his tenth test, did Hashem recognize that Avraham was a Tzadik?

The Vilna Gaon explains that a person’s greatness cannot truly be recognized until they have displayed the ability to use two opposite character traits to serve Hashem. To show that one is truly a Yirei Elokim, they must show that they are capable of doing whatever Hashem wants, no matter the nature, behavior, or character trait it may require. It can be very easy for a person to serve Hashem by doing that which comes naturally to him, however, when one does that which is natural, while it may still be a good deed, it does not display greatness. Only when a person goes against their true nature in order to serve Hashem do they show that they are a Yirei Elokim.

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how these qualities had earned Avraham enormous prestige and respect. When he set his own way of life, Lot instinctively imitated the patterns of Avraham’s life. Abraham had been kind, so he was kind. Abraham had been hospitable, so he was hospitable. This became the pattern of his existence, to the point that he knew no other. But it was all superficial. Lot’s kindness did not come from deep love or profound empathy for other people. All of his acts of kindness were superficial, merely the products of habit. To have acted otherwise would have disrupted the equilibrium in his life. Underneath lay the true Lot, the greedy, self-centered man intent on gratification and insensitive to the needs of others. When he had to choose a place to live, the other side of Lot’s character made sure he would settle in a place suitable to his true character.

Nevertheless, even in Sodom, the old habits continued, and Lot continued to go through the motions of hospitality – even at the risk of his life. It is a well-known psychological phenomenon that people are often willing to risk death rather than disrupt the familiar patterns of their existence. Lot was such a person. He was a creature of habit, not principle. The difference between Avraham and Lot displayed itself in their descendants. Avraham was the epicenter of kindness, and therefore, this trait was passed down to his descendants for all time, even to this very day. Lot’s kindness, however, was only superficial, and his descendants, the ungrateful nations of Ammon and Moav, showed his true nature.

In our own lives, we must ask ourselves if our values and the patterns of our lives are only mechanical habits, or if they are truly what we stand for and what we believe in. We must remember that the children of Lot did not emulate what he did, rather, they emulated what he was. If we want our children to follow in our footsteps, we must be like Avraham– kind, hospitable and well-mannered- what we do and what we are must be one and the same, displaying our true character to all.

(Adapted from Rabbi Naftali Reich)

of himself, he saw in it scenery that resembled the outskirts of his hometown. Upon closer examination, he saw the paved road that led right to his own house. Totally startled, he shouted to his staff officer to come quickly and see. “The two of them stared. Suddenly, they could see inside the house, where the general’s wife was sitting at a table, writing a letter to her husband! They were even able to see the letter clearly enough to read it. In it she apologized for the long break in communication, and that it was due to her pregnancy and delivery of a baby boy. Both mother and son were doing well. “My father was overwhelmed by the vision in the mirror. He thanked the Baal Shem Tov profusely. After a while, he received a letter in the mail from his wife—identical to what he had seen in the mirror! At that point, my father wrote down the whole story in detail in his personal diary.” The commanding officer concluded, “I am the son whose birth was referred to in that letter. Also, the journal in which my father recorded this event is in my possession. If you will stay a bit longer, I will be happy to show it to you.” And he did.

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forced to enter it. However, at the akeidah; nobody forced Avraham to sacrifice his son, yet he did so willingly. In addition, Avraham’s actions were noteworthy because he did not question Hashem’s judgment. Avraham had every reason to question Hashem (who had previously promised that Yitzchak would be the progenitor of a great nation and who now appeared to have changed His mind), yet Avraham remained silent. Also, writes the Chida, we know that Avraham was the epitome of a kind person. Surely it was against all he believed in to slaughter his son. Nevertheless, Avraham conquered his natural tendencies to fulfilled Hashem’s will.

R’ Elchonon Wasserman adds another answer to our question: Martyrdom is relatively easy, for the martyr knows that he is going to a better place, to Olam Haba. What if, however, a martyr were asked to give up his Olam Haba? Could he do it? Rav Elchonon explains taht Avraham was asked to do something even harder than giving up his Olam Haba, for Avraham valued the continuation of his teachings in this World more than he valued his place in the World-to-Come. (We learn this from the fact that after Hashem promised Avraham, “Your reward is very great,” Avraham replied, “What can You give me when I am childless?”) If Avraham had slaughtered Yitzchak, the continuity of Avraham’s teachings would have been at an end. Even so, Avraham went willingly to the akeidah. Although we can learn many lessons from this test of Avraham, we must note to ourselves the amount we must work on our Avodas Hashem.

Adopted from Torah.org

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In spite of the difficulty that is present when fighting their nature they obey Hashem because He asked them to.

This is the case of Avraham Avinu. Until this point, everything that Avraham had done, had been done with kindness and mercy. His first nine tests had all been to serve Hashem through doing good for others, through doing acts of kindness. Mercy and kindness were second nature to Avraham. These tests were not difficult for him to perform because it was natural for Avraham to be nice and do good. These were character traits Avraham represented his entire life. This tenth test however, tested Avraham’s ability to commit a cruel and somewhat perverse act in order to serve Hashem, as now he was being asked to kill his only son. This test went against Avraham’s entire nature, went against all that he stood for, only for the purpose of serving Hashem. When Avraham was about to pass this test and show that he could truly serve Hashem in any way possible, not only in ways that were natural to him, only then could Hashem fully recognize what an incredible Tzadik and Yirei Elokim Avraham truly was. Now that Avraham displayed his service to Hashem through opposite traits of kindness and of cruelty, “Atah Yadati Ki Yirei Elokim Ata.”

The Gra goes on to explain that this can help us understand a strange connection between two seemingly unrelated Mitzvos in the Torah. We know that there are two Mitzvos in the Torah for which the reward mentioned is Arichus Yamim, a long life: the Mitzvah of Kibbud Av V’Eim, to honor one’s parents, and the Mitzvah of Shiluach Hakein, the Mitzvah to chase a mother bird and take her eggs. Why are these Mitzvos given the same reward? What is the connection between them?

The Gra explains that the reason the reward for these two Mitzvos is long life is because only by accomplishing these two Mitzvos, one that highlights doing good and one that highlights committing a cruel act because Hashem commanded us so, can a person become complete. And when a person can show he is complete and great in his service to Hashem, then he is deserving of a long life.

Have a great Shabbos!

STORIES OF GREATNESS

TOLD OVER BY: TZVI GRUSHKO

Once in his travels, Rabbi Shneur Zalman stopped in a certain city. While he was there, a house caught on fire. The rebbe asked to be taken to the neighborhood where the fire was. When he arrived at the scene, a group of Russian soldiers from the local garrison were trying in vain to extinguish it. The rebbe stood in front of the blazing home and leaned on his cane. He remained utterly still for a few moments. Suddenly, the fire died down. The exhausted soldiers could barely believe their eyes. They ran to report the astonishing turn of events to their commanding officer. He listened calmly, then sent a delegation of soldiers to ask the rebbe to come to see him. When the rebbe arrived, the officer asked him, "Are you by chance the son or grandson of the Jewish holy man known as the Baal Shem Tov?" The rebbe told him that he was not actually a blood relative, but he considered himself his spiritual grandson because he was a disciple of the main disciple and successor of the Baal Shem Tov. "If so," remarked the officer, "I am no longer amazed at what you did today. Come, sit down, and I will tell you a story about my deceased father and the Baal Shem Tov." "My father carried the rank of general. Once he came with his troops to the village of Mezhibuzh shortly before your holiday of Passover. My father then was deeply troubled, because many weeks had passed since he had received a letter, or any message at all, from his wife. Brooding, with his imagination running wild, he confided his distress to a few local resi-

dents with whom he was friendly. They immediately suggested that perhaps he should seek the advice of the holy Jew who lived in their town, who was a wonder-maker and revealer of secrets." "My father sent a soldier to the Baal Shem Tov to request an appointment. Much to his surprise, the Baal Shem Tov refused to see the soldier. My father sent another soldier, but still the Baal Shem Tov refused. My father was annoyed, but he knew about you Jews and your holidays. He sent another delegation, this time with the threat that if the Baal Shem Tov would not grant the general an interview, he would billet his troops in the Jewish community, causing loads of bread and other chametz food to be brought into the home of every Jew in the village during the days of preparing for Passover!" "The threat worked. The Baal Shem Tov sent back a message inviting the general, my father, to his home. He went there right away, bringing with him one of his subordinates." "Upon entering the front room, they right away saw through the open doorway that the Baal Shem Tov was sitting in the second room, totally absorbed in the book in front of him (which my father subsequently found out was the Zohar). However, before he could enter or even knock on the door, my father's attention was caught by a large mirror on the wall in the front room." He went over to it, having decided to comb his hair before going in to greet the rebbe. He glanced at the mirror, and to his astonishment, instead

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