

# AT THE ARTSCROLL SHABBOS TABLE

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פרשת וירא  
"וַיֵּרָא חֹשֶׁן תְּשֻׁבָּה"  
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## PARASHAH

## A GREATER IMPACT

Darash Moshe from Rav Moshe Feinstein

וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו ה' בְּאֵלֵינוּ מִמְרָא וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח הָאֵהָל בְּחֹם הַיּוֹם.

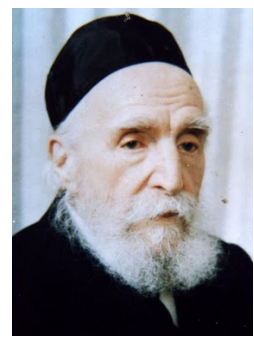
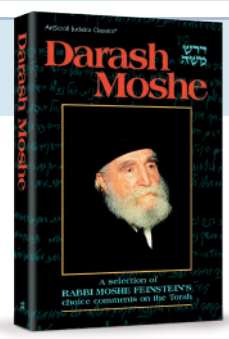
*Hashem appeared to him in the plains of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day (18:1).*

Rashi explains that because Mamre gave Avraham advice concerning *bris milah*, Hashem honored him by causing His Presence to appear to Avraham on Mamre's property. Many commentators have asked why Avraham chose to confer with Mamre about

private. Avraham thought that it might be better to do it privately, since were it to become generally known that he had performed such a seemingly dangerous and irrational act on himself, it would undermine the message he had been preaching for years that

demands, Avraham felt that a private fulfillment of the *mitzvah* was more in order. Not unreasonably, Avraham was worried that he might lose a large portion of those with whom he had worked so diligently to bring under the wings of the Divine Presence.

Nonetheless, Mamre advised him not to conceal his circumcision on the ground that it is wrong to be too clever with Hashem's *mitzvos*. Once Hashem gives a *mitzvah*, we should just do it and not think too deeply into its rationale and consequences, even when we are aware of perfectly valid reasons for it. Simply doing a *mitzvah* for the sake of fulfilling Hashem's will has a greater impact on the world than any number of reasons and explanations. 📖



**SIMPLY DOING A MITZVAH FOR THE SAKE OF FULFILLING HASHEM'S WILL HAVE A GREATER IMPACT ON THE WORLD THAN ANY NUMBER OF REASONS AND EXPLANATIONS.**

this. Was Hashem's command not sufficient for him?

We may say that Avraham's question to Mamre was not, Heaven forbid, whether or not to obey Hashem's directive, but rather whether to perform the *milah* in public or in

all Hashem's ways are rational and agreeable, unlike the barbaric and pagan practices that prevailed at the time. Fearful that those whom he had brought to a recognition of Hashem could not rationally fathom the depth of His

**WATCH A FASCINATING INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR OF *YOU REVEALED*, NAFTALI HOROWITZ**

*Managing Director and Financial Advisor at J.P. Morgan*

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ARTSCROLL LATAM'S

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' זַעֲקַת סְדֹם וְעֹמֶרָה כִּי רַבָּה וְחַטָּאתָם כִּי כְבֹּדָה מְאֹד.  
אֲרָדָה נָא וְאֶרְאֶה הַכְצַעֲקוּתָהּ הַבָּאָה אֵלַי עָשׂוּ כָלָה וְאִם לֹא אֲדַעָהּ.

*Hashem said, "Because the outcry of Sedom and Amora has become great, and although their sin is extremely weighty, I will go down to see; if what they did is equal to the cry I heard, I will bring destruction. And if not, I will know" (18:20-21).*

Certainly, Hashem was aware of the magnitude of the sins of Sedom. In the area of interpersonal behavior, Hashem said that "the outcry" of the oppressed people in Sedom "has become great" in number, even if each individual sin seems minor; in the area of their relationship to Hashem, their sins were "weighty" and serious.

Nevertheless, Hashem's mercy required a "closer investigation." He said to the angels sent to destroy the cities, "I will go down to see," i.e., I will look at all aspects of the situation and of the people involved, rather than seeing simply the acts that were performed as a human judge is wont to do.

In *Koheles* (3:16) it states, "I saw that under the sun, in the place of justice there is [seen] the crime." The human court can only see the crime, but it can never come to a complete understanding of the person who committed the crime, and therefore all instances of the same can transgression need to be punished more or less in the same way. Hashem, on the other hand, takes all factors

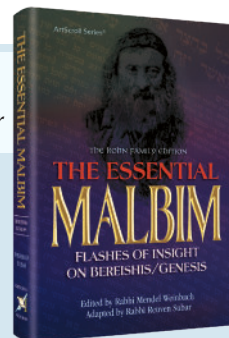
into account, relating to the person and the situation as a whole, as *Koheles* continues, "the righteous and the wicked will be judged by Hashem." Hashem looks at the big picture: the act itself, its context, and its consequences.

In the case of Sedom, their extreme inhospitality and cruelty to outsiders and to the poor, if evaluated from

## THE HUMAN COURT CAN ONLY SEE THE CRIME, BUT IT CAN NEVER COME TO A COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING OF THE PERSON WHO COMMITTED THE CRIME.

the point of view of the damage done to the victims, would seem to demand strict punishment. However, Hashem considered their actions in their overall context and with attention to the nature of the perpetrators. If there would have been an inordinate number of poor who demanded help and who as a result would have depleted all the resources of Sedom, or if the personality of the rich would have been naturally

*continued on page 3*



וַיֹּאמֶר קַח נָא אֶת בְּנֶךְ אֶת יִצְחָק אֲשֶׁר אֶהְבֶּתָּ אֶת יִצְחָק וְלֵךְ לְךָ אֶל אֶרֶץ  
הַמֹּרְיָה וְהֵעֵלֵהוּ שָׁם לְעֹלָה עַל אֶחָד הַהָרִים אֲשֶׁר אֹמַר אֵלֶיךָ.

*And [Hashem] said, "Please take your son, your only one, whom you love, Yitzchak, and go to the land of Moriah, and bring him up there as an offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you" (22:2).*


Hashem did not tell Avraham, "Slaughter him," because he did not intend for Yitzchak to be slaughtered, but only that he be brought up to the mountain and be prepared as a burnt offering. Once Avraham had complied literally and brought him up, Hashem told him not to slaughter Yitzchak (22:12). This resolves the apparent contradiction

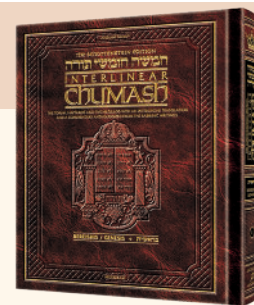


Rav Chaim Soloveitchik

between Hashem's original command that Yitzchak be brought as an offering and His later order that he remain unharmed. Avraham had been commanded to bring him up, which he did, but not to actually slaughter him (*Rashi*).

In thinking that he was to slaughter Yitzchak, Avraham did not misunderstand Hashem's first

command, because the general rule is that once an animal is designated as an offering, the entire sacrificial service must be performed. For example, if someone were to sanctify an animal, he could not discharge his obligation merely by placing it on an altar and then taking it down. Only Hashem could tell Avraham that Yitzchak was to be "brought up" but the not slaughtered (Rav Chaim Soloveitchik). 



Rav Chaim Kanievsky  
on *Zemiros* by Rabbi Shai  
Graucher

NEW!



The *Bircas Ha'orei'ach*, the guest's blessing recited during *Bircas Hamazon*, says, "May his dealings be successful and conveniently close at hand."

A guest at the home of Rav Chaim Kanievsky said *Bircas Hamazon* and recited the *Bircas Ha'orei'ach*. Afterward, he asked Rav Chaim, "I



Rav Chaim Kanievsky

**IT MEANS  
THAT THE  
SEFARIM I  
NEED WILL  
BE NEAR AT  
HAND."**

gave you a blessing that your dealings should be successful. Do you have any *nechasim*, any dealings and transactions?"

Rav Chaim pointed at his many bookcases filled with *sefarim*. "These are my dealings," he said.

"But I blessed you that they be 'close to the city.' How can that blessing be fulfilled with such dealings?"

Rav Chaim smiled. "It means that the *sefarim* I need will be nearby and I won't have to climb the shelves when I need a *sefer*." 📖

## THE NATURE OF DIVINE JUDGMENT

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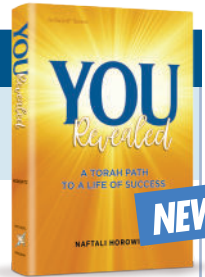
miserly, or if the times would have been ones of war or disaster, the retribution coming to the people of Sedom would have been lessened.

In fact, though, the people of Sedom were lavish spenders on themselves. They lived in times of peace and tranquility. Visits from strangers were rare, and there were few needy people. Rather, they did their sins from a sense of arrogance and rebelliousness against Hashem.

Hashem told the angels, "If what they did is equal to the cry I heard," I will punish them with the most extreme strictness, but otherwise, "I will know," I will take all mitigating circumstances into account. In fact, there were no reasons to lighten their sentence, and the angels were told to carry out a complete destruction. 📖

## THE WORLD'S PURPOSE

*You Revealed* by Naftali Horowitz



NEW!

The CEO of a large Israeli corporation once reached out to me for financial advice, and we met for coffee in the upscale hotel at which he was staying. When we concluded our business discussion, he looked at me and said, "I see that you wear a *kippah*. I guess that means that you believe." (Can you imagine an American CEO saying that?)

"Believe in what?" I asked.

"In G-d."

"Naturally. Don't you?"

"No, of course not — I'm an atheist."

"What do you believe?"

"That we all come from apes and there is no Creator."

"So, I guess you lie and steal."

"No!"

"Even if no one would ever find out?"

"No, never!"

"Why not?"

"It's wrong!"

"Who says? Why shouldn't we have whatever we want?"

"It's just wrong!"

"Do you give charity?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"It's the right thing to do."

"Who says?"

"My heart."

"As the CEO of a major corporation, you ought to know better than to follow your heart when it's leading you astray. The theory you believe in claims that only the fittest are meant to

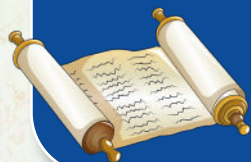
survive. Why, then, should your heart be motivated to help the less fit survive? Aren't you messing things up?"

"I guess I am."

"You can't explain why you don't lie, cheat, and steal, or why you give charity, because all of those things are based on the existence of morality, and in your world, morality doesn't exist. Don't you see? If there is no Creator, there is no right and wrong, and even if there seems to be, it is nothing more than an idea, fabricated by humans as a mechanism to keep the world from going amok. Who says that you have to follow 'their' rules, especially if you will never get caught? 'They' say it's immoral or wrong, but why can't you choose to disagree?"

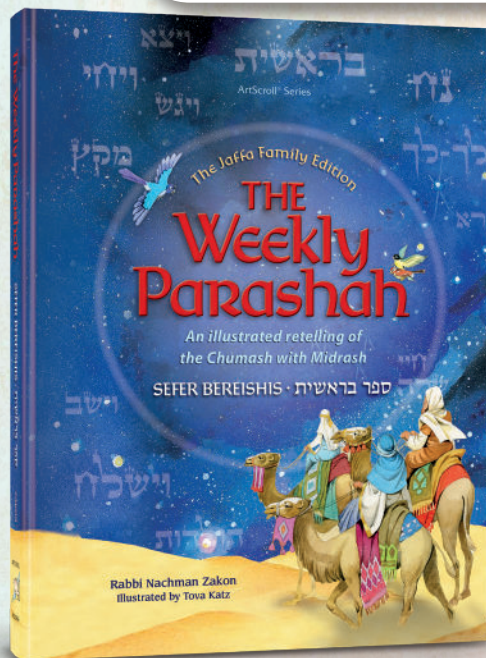
Noticing his perplexed expression, I continued: "Without a Creator, nothing at all has any purpose, and without purpose, NOTHING matters, including YOU. In a world where nothing matters, right and wrong, good and bad, cannot exist. I, on the other hand, believe that there is a Creator, and so I believe in purposeful creation. I believe that EVERYTHING matters, and you do too, which is why you don't steal and do help the poor. YOU just don't yet realize that you believe, but your Jewish heart does." 📖





# Parashah for Children

## פרשת וירא



## The Letters of Yitzchak's Name

The numerical value of the letters of Yitzchak's name stand for:

- י Yud = 10: Avraham's tenth test was Akeidas Yitzchak. At that time Yitzchak was ready to die for Hashem.
- צ Tzaddik = 90: Yitzchak's mother, Sarah, was 90 when he was born.
- ח Ches = 8: The day Yitzchak had his bris.
- ק Kuf = 100: Yitzchak's father, Avraham, was 100 when he was born.

## The Akeidah Lesson

During the years of the Holocaust, doing mitzvos was very hard. The Germans would often kill Jews who tried to follow the laws of the Torah. But Jews were clever and found ways to do the mitzvos anyway, even though they were risking their lives. In concentration camps and ghettos they put on tefillin, ate matzah, lit Chanukah candles, and did many other mitzvos.

Hundreds of years earlier, during the Spanish Expulsion, the Jews were told either to stop being Jews or they would have to leave the country. Thousands of Jews left their homes and everything they owned behind and became homeless refugees. Why? So they could continue to do the mitzvos.

In the early 1900's in America, if you didn't work on Shabbos it was almost impossible to get a job. Yet there were Jews who kept Shabbos anyway, even though it meant being very poor.

Where do the Jews get the strength to do mitzvos even when it's so difficult? The Akeidah.

Avraham and Yitzchak did what Hashem wanted. Even though it was incredibly hard to do. What they did was put into the genes of the Jewish people the power and inspiration to do mitzvos no matter how hard or dangerous it might be.

Because we come from Avraham and Yitzchak



we too have the power to do mitzvos we find difficult. Getting out of bed to go to shul, though we would rather sleep. Not buying a really cool outfit we would love to wear because it is not modest. Apologizing to a friend who we hurt because of something we said, even if what we said was true!

We're children of Avraham and Yitzchak, and we do the mitzvos. No matter what. And that is the lesson of the Akeidah.