

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	KETUVIM
Vayeira	27 Oct 2018	18 Cheshvan 5779	Gen. 18:1-22:24	2Kings 4:1-37	Luke 17:28-37

We continue with this week's Torah portion, Vayeira which has similar events in Abraham's life. Last week, we ended with Abraham being circumcised upon Hashem's commands. The big difference between the last week's portion, Lech Lecha with this week's portion, Vayeira is the life of Abraham before and after the circumcision. The sages teach that the life of Abraham has ascended the spiritual ladder as far as human efforts can take him. In this parashat, Hashem appears to him and elevates him to a level of spiritual life beyond the reach of human effort.<sup>1</sup>

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, 2047, the third day after the circumcision, Abraham was sitting at the entrance to the tent when Hashem appeared to Abraham to pay a visit to the sick. We learn from here that when a person is ill, we are to visit and comfort them as Hashem has done to Abraham. Prior to circumcision, Hashem appeared to Abraham numerous times to tell him something. However, Hashem's appearance without giving any commands indicates rewards for obeying Hashem's commandments, suggesting that Hashem was pleased by Abraham's action.

Why was circumcision (in Hebrew, it is called *brit milah*) important? The *brit milah* or simply *brit* is a physical symbol of the relationship between Hashem and the Israelites. *Brit* means 'covenant' between Hashem and you. When a male baby is born, the vitamin K begins to increase in his body which helps the blood to clot and prevents serious bleeding. It reaches 100% on the seventh day. On the eighth day, it reaches 110% and it begins to go down again on the ninth day. Therefore, the *brit* is performed on the eighth day.

The *brit* establishes a correlation between one who "sacrifices" his body to Hashem by performing the commandment of circumcision, and one who offers an animal as a sacrifice.<sup>2</sup> When Abraham performed *brit* on Yitzchak (Isaac), he is in essence being offered as a *korban minchah* (burnt offering). The sages teach that when the baby being circumcised, he receives a tremendous burst of spirituality, equivalent to his full capacity for holiness in his life time. Afterward, this departs from him, and he must subsequently earn these spiritual powers through his own toil and efforts.<sup>3</sup>

Now, Abraham had a complete trust in Hashem. The word 'trust' in Hebrew is *emun* (אֱמוּנָה), and the word 'belief' in Hebrew is *emunah* (אֱמוּנָה) which means 'a complete trust'. To put it together, Abraham had an *emunah* (complete trust) through faith in Hashem. For this reason, he was able to withstand challenges in his life.

There are two types of challenges: First is "what I am", and the other is "what I can be". For example, let us say that I am skinny but wanted a body like Arnold Schwarzenegger. So, "what I am" is my present situation that I am now 'skinny'. Since I want a body like Arnold that is "what I can be" through resistance trainings (challenges).

Hashem put challenges in front of us for what I can become. Many people say that Hashem made a person great. However, that is not the goal of Hashem. His goal is to put you into testing (challenges, or trials) for you to withstand such challenges to become great. Because He wants you to be great. That is the faith and the *emunah* of Abraham in Hashem. Where do we find such examples? Genesis 22:3.

<sup>1</sup> Torah, The Book of Genesis, The Lubavitcher Rebbe, p. 105

<sup>2</sup> The Midrash, Bereisheis Rabbah, 48:5

<sup>3</sup> ibid, 48:1

Hashem commanded Abraham to offer Yitzchak (Isaac) as a sacrifice. (Gen. 22:2) It says in verse 3, “Avraham rose up early in the morning.” The sages teach that the hidden message in the verse is that Avraham did not toss and turn during the night, nor did he think about how he should save his son. Instead, he slept deep and well. This was the faith and the belief he had in Hashem. Abraham was rewarded for such belief in verse 12 when Hashem said, “for now I know that you fear Elohim.”

The question we need to ask ourselves for this week is, “What is your faith and belief in Hashem?”