

**BETWEEN ANGELS
AND MERE MORTALS:
May One Be Critical of Our Avot?**

Source Materials
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Shabbat Shalom

Chaya Sarah

A Modern Midrash

Efrat, Israel — Are Abraham and Sarah the perfect couple who live happily ever after? Of course, we don't ordinarily think of the founder of the ethical monotheistic revolution, the pivotal figure of an entire new way of looking at the world, as being anything but the ideal husband to Sarah, the good humble Jewish wife, always at her husband's side. But a seemingly extra word in our portion this week opens up the possibility of a modern midrash and a daring comment.

"And Sarah died in Kiryat Arba, that is Hebron, in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to eulogize Sarah and to weep for her." [Genesis 23:1-2] If we read the above carefully, we note that the text says Abraham "...came to mourn and eulogize," when it could have just as easily said that "Abraham mourned and eulogized." Why the extra word 'vayauvo' (and he came)?

Rashi [23:2] explains that Abraham came from Beersheva, an idea reinforced by a text we find at the very end of last week's portion which reads "...Abraham returned to his young men, and together they set out and went to Beersheva. Abraham remained in Beersheva. [Genesis 22:19]

Now if Abraham came from

where he had lived with Sarah and Isaac before the binding, from Beersheva, it is appropriate to ask: what was Sarah doing in Hebron? Could she actually have moved to Hebron while her husband was in Beersheva?

Having informed us of Abraham's point of departure when he set out to mourn and weep for his wife, Rashi then tells us that the Torah's account of Sarah's death follows in the footsteps of the Binding of Isaac because one was a cause of the other: "as word reached Sarah as to what has transpired on Mt. Moriah that her son was prepared for slaughter - her soul flew away from her and she died.

The Rambam (1194-1270) does not allow for the possibility of Abraham's living in Beersheva and "coming" to Hebron because this implies that husband and wife were living apart when Sarah died. A temporary solution to this dilemma of two cities would place Abraham and Sarah effectively in Hebron but that he'd gone off to Beersheva on personal business; while there, word came to him of Sarah's death, and he hurried back home, to Hebron, to mourn and bury Sarah.

This description may solve the problem of how Abraham got to Beersheva, but it creates another in its wake: if Abraham is a Hebronite who leaves his city for a few days, then we

have to discard the interpretation of Rashi which says that the death Sarah followed immediately upon the "binding", because the "binding" took place whilst Abraham and Sarah were living in Beersheva.

The Rambam goes on to offer several alternative sequences, initially citing the Midrash that Abraham came directly from Mt. Moriah to eulogize Sarah. But if so, what was she doing in Hebron?

Before I suggest an interpretation, I must preface it with a word of explanation. There are two distinct approaches to the personalities of the Bible. One, as illustrated by the holy Zohar, tends to idealize each of them as being larger than life with almost divine qualities of greatness. The other, as illustrated by the Rambam, sees them as great but fallible human beings, who are prone to sin and weakness despite their unique qualities. It seems



that the second method of exegesis enables us to identify with, and therefore learn from, the patriarchs and matriarchs to the greatest degree.

To the world at large, Abraham is a great leader who puts into motion a revolutionary perception of G-d, and man's role in the universe. He is the absolute idealist, ready to talk to everyone at anytime, his tent and his heart and his telephone are always open to all seekers and strangers.

Sarah, however, saw the side of Abraham, the public never got to see, the great teacher who often had no time for his own wife and child. Often, this G-d inspired magnetic and extroverted personality, seemed to take those closest to him for granted. When they were younger and a famine forced them to travel to Egypt, Abraham concealed Sarah's identity to mitigate the risk to his own life because the people always had an eye out for an addition to the king's harem. "Now I realize you are a beautiful woman," [Gen. 12:11] Abraham says, which suggests that in the pursuit of his own ideals, he took little notice of Sarah, not even of her beauty.

Childless, Sarah offers Abraham her Egyptian slave girl, Hagar, to become a surrogate mother. Though she initiated the step, Sarah's heart may have easily been broken when her husband so readily agreed. "My wrath is against you," [Gen. 16:5] she says to Abraham after Hagar's haughtiness grows unbearable. Abraham survived ten tests given by G-d, and perhaps Hagar was an eleventh test given him by Sarah which he failed. Sarah

wanted him to say that he would never take another woman because his love for her was as great as his faith in G-d that a nation would emerge from his good.

The Binding of Isaac sends not only a father into a direct confrontation with G-d, but also places the mother in an impossible situation. I can picture the following scene between husband and wife on the morning of the binding.

Abraham has risen early and Sarah asks: "Where are you going?" Abraham answers that G-d is sending him on a special mission with Isaac. "What kind of mission?" Her husband cannot reveal the truth so he tried to ignore Sarah's question, which leaves her with an ominous feeling. "Does it have anything to do with a sacrifice?" White-faced, Abraham mutters something under his breath, then tells her the child will be fine. Sarah responds in righteous anger: "You've sacrificed both of us to your G-d and your dreams, never a question who was first and who was second in your eyes, but enough is enough. Don't go off with the child!"

Abraham, of course, doesn't heed Sarah, and the last word she cries to him as he disappears in the distance is, "When you get back, don't think I'll be here waiting for you."

And indeed, when he returns, she's left Beersheva, where they'd been living, and word reaches him that she has died in hebron. The miracle of his son's having been saved at the last moment is now tarnished by the death of his faithful wife who stood at his side during the most difficult times - but balked at the thought of

the ultimate sacrifice of her beloved son. After all, she has not heard the Divine command!

The only woman whose age at her death is given in the Bible, Sarah's life takes on new meaning as Abraham mourns for her. Perhaps in the eulogy he spoke of the failings of a leader who still had to learn how to become a husband and a father first, if he ever succeeded, the person to thank and bless was his life soul-mate, Sarah. It is interesting to note that although Abraham continues to live sixty-five years after Sarah's death, the Bible does not record a single accomplishment of his without her.

Shlomo Riskin

Conflicts Within The Family

CONFESSIONS OF A BIBLICAL COMMENTATOR

The Rights - and Wrongs -
of Individual Interpretations
in Biblical Exegesis

In tribute to
Olive & Adrienne Marks
beloved friends
generous benefactors
courageous Jews

by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Guidelines for Biblical Interpretation

Having explained the basis for the various commentaries which engendered controversy, I must admit that I have learned a great deal from the voices raised in protest. The earlier pieces which appeared over my signature on Joseph, for example, had not actually been written by me; they were re-workings of oral lectures I had given - and in retrospect I believe that the style of writing which emerged lacked a properly respectful tone for the great personages under discussion. I have learned that the oral word cannot simply be transcribed and submitted as a written text; after all, "not everything that one thinks ought one say, not everything that one says ought one write, and not everything that one writes ought one publish." This is especially true when a "ghost-writer" adds comparisons to movie-screen characters (with whom, those who know me are aware, I am not at all familiar) of questionable character. I apologize for and retract these pieces, and have already stopped using such a method of transcription.

Moreover, when one presents an isolated commentary on a particular verse or on a specific aspect of a biblical personality (in a weekly newspaper, for example, as contrasted with an entire *sefer* of commentaries), the reader does not receive a whole picture of the greatness of the personality under discussion - as well as the truth that what is being offered is only one possibility within a myriad of possibilities. And, given the rich complexity of the biblical personalities, all may be true. When the one aspect under discussion expresses a negative characteristic, the reader may receive the false impression that the commentator views the entire personality in negative terms. If this is what came out regarding Abraham or Moses, I certainly apologize, for it was hardly my intent to denigrate the founders of our faith.

A Storied Life

By Emanuel Feldman

No sooner does a leading *rosh yeshivah* or rabbinic luminary pass from the scene than the Orthodox media swings into action with his life story. Articles, reminiscences, appreciations, and book-length treatments—all of them suitably adulatory—begin to appear, so that even relatively obscure *gedolim* become more famous in death than in life.

Most of these life stories—with a few shining exceptions—have common themes: the individual was brilliant, profound, wise, righteous, and kind. He was never angry, never discouraged, never wasted any time, never had any inner conflicts. Thus it comes as no surprise that certain questions—questions that are crucial to our understanding of any major leader—will rarely be addressed.

For example, did Torah study come easily to this particular *gadol*, or was he possessed of only an average mind, learning to master the intricacies of Torah through sheer force of will and diligence? Did he ever have intellectual struggles, crises of faith? Did he ever suffer any personal disappointments or tragedy? Was his path from infancy to world-renowned scholarship and leadership an unimpeded upward trajectory, or were there other paths that beckoned, other byways that tempted him?

We learn all about the *gadol's* dazzling scholarship, but how was he as a father, a husband, a teacher? He was obviously a very angelic person: in what ways was he

human as well? Was he constantly engaged in study and acts of *chesed*, or did other matters occupy him as well? Was he gregarious, or did he live an isolated existence?

We will never know. Firstly, the awe and reverence that are integral elements of this genre preclude any independent research—which explains why many of the life stories we get are not biographies at all but monochromatic, one-dimensional hagiographies of saintly people who were born perfect and remained perfect throughout their perfect lives.

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One often wonders: when young people read about such flawless creatures, are they uplifted or discouraged? One can only imagine the impact upon a bright 15-year-old yeshivah student—who has the intellect and drive to become a great Torah scholar—when he reads that by age 15, this or that great *mar* knew the Talmud by heart and had written two world-recognized *sefarim* on the most recondite subjects in *halachah*.

There is another critical problem endemic to this genre—a stylistic and literary one. These are not so much biographies—even in the loosest sense

of that word as written accounts of a person's life—as they are collections of stories of a person's life.

Stories, both written and verbal, are obviously an integral part of any history. But in today's *gadol* hagiography (one resists the temptation to label it "gadol-ography") one of the common characteristics of these ubiquitous stories is that they are, well, common. More often than not, they shed no new light on character or personality. On the contrary, they tend to trivialize the subject and drag him down to the level of the ordinary. Frequently they illustrate a quality that is hardly extraordinary, and would be considered normal behavior for any decent human being. We are informed that Rav so-and-so always made certain that the woman who asked him a *she'eilah* was treated respectfully. But why is it unusual for a human being, much less someone steeped in Torah ethics, to treat another human being with respect? Or we read that Rav such-and-such was extremely honest, never cheated anyone, and was meticulous about paying all his bills and debts on time. But is this kind of behavior not expected of any decent Jew? Why must it be featured—and literally italicized—as if it were something uniquely found in this *gadol's* character?

These are not rhetorical questions. In a profound sense, an act of *chesed* performed by a great Torah personality is different in kind from the same act performed by a less saintly person. When Rav Moshe Feinstein is careful not to denigrate even the silliest of halachic inquiries, or when Rav Yosef B. Soloveitchik foi-

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lows a student into the lunchroom to inform the *talmid* that he was on target in his Talmudic analysis while he, Rav Yosef Ber. was mistaken, there is more here than garden-variety decency or intellectual honesty. For a true *gadol*, by virtue of his own inner qualities and spirituality, brings to his deed a certain quality of holiness, a certain state of mind and inwardness that is unique to one living a life of Torah. The identical act of kindness or honesty, performed by someone not steeped in the sanctity of Torah, does not bear the same spiritual resonance and power. These are subtle matters that are worthy of discussion, but unfortunately most of the storytellers do not make the effort, with the inevitable platitudinous results.

Further, what are we to make of a literary genre that contains more stories than life? Is it because, there being no depth in the writing, no new perceptions or insights into the personality under review, we are left only with a string of loosely connected, generic, interchangeable Lego-like anecdotes that are by and large unimpressive?

Agenda-driven stories that are devoid of content, combined with biographies that are short on objectivity and long on reverential awe, combine to create a new genre that cannot be taken seriously by anyone but the most naive and credulous.

→ There are stories and there are stories. The story of Joseph and his brothers—the longest sustained narrative in the entire Torah—is obviously more than a mere story. As part of Torah, it is more than narrative, and its multi-layered structure illuminates and instructs in ways that we cannot fathom. But at the very least it contains critical lessons for living, and it does this by painting a full picture of its protagonists. To view it merely as good literature would be to denigrate it, but even on the most elementary level, the narrative—with its lights and shadows, positives and negatives—is uplifting precisely because it is multi-hued, uncompromising and

unrelenting in its honesty.

One shudders to think how it would be written today. Would any contemporary religious writer dare mention that Joseph, in his youth, was concerned with his physical appearance (Rashi on Gen. 37:2)? As for Jacob's favoring one son over another—would not our writer gloss over that inconvenient fact? Would Joseph's talebearing be omitted, as well as the jealousy of the brothers? Would not the story of Judah and Tamar be excised because it might offend—as would the story of Joseph and the wife of Potifar? And the slaughter of the inhabitants of Shechem is so unbecoming the sons of Jacob that it might best be elided. The actual hurling of Joseph into the pit and his subsequent sale into slavery—would not this

Puerile, cookie-cutter life stories are no tribute to the *gedolim* and no help to us.

cast an unflattering and cruel light on the brothers, and be expurgated from the story?

In today's *gadol*-ography (the term is irresistible) we would be treated only to the bare-bones information that Joseph, whom Jacob loved very much, mysteriously disappeared, causing Jacob great anguish, and did not appear until 22 years later as viceroy of Egypt. Jacob, we would be told, never lost hope, since he was a great *tzaddik*, and Joseph, also a great *tzaddik* like his father, always knew that some day he would see his father again. And when because of the great famine Jacob went down to Egypt, he finally was reunited with his son, and lived happily ever after in Goshen until he died at the ripe old age of 147.

What is striking about the real Joseph

narrative is that we emerge from it not only deeply stirred but also with a keener understanding of human nature, of ourselves, and—most significantly—of our own relationship to man and God.

Perhaps these ought to be the criteria by which a "*gadol* story" is to be judged: Is it unique or is it ordinary? Does it impart a crucial lesson? Does it flesh out the personality of the subject, giving us a deeper understanding of who he really was? Does it energize the mind and uplift the soul? Does it display the Torah in action? A story is a means to an end, not an end in itself. A life story should reveal, first of all, a life. Anecdotes, though important, are secondary to that life.

Gedolei *Yisrael* are the true leaders of the Jewish people. Their integrity, scholarship, piety and vision, their abiding faith in the eternity of the Jewish people and in the promises of God, are the stars by which the people Israel navigate through the dark night of the *Galut*. Their inner passion and spiritual vitality help the masses of Jews cope with the crises that continually beset us.

It is precisely because *gedolim* and *posekim* are so crucial to Jewish existence that searching biographies, grounded in life and in truth, are so indispensable. The masses of Jews thirst for uplift and inspiration. Puerile, cookie-cutter life stories are no tribute to the *gedolim* and no help to us.

That incisive biographies do appear from time to time only underscores the fact that it can be done. Such writing requires not only objectivity and careful research, but also a recognition of the reader's intelligence and his ability to absorb ideas and subtleties. When a reader senses that he is being condescended to, that instead of an account of a meaningful life he is being offered bedtime stories, that reader, if he has any self-respect, will turn away.

Which is a pity, because he is turning away not only from the story of a significant life, but also from the ideals which that life represents. **IA**

"Gadolographies"— The Real Story

■ As much as we may be inspired by published biographies of *gedolei Yisrael*, we certainly recognize that those that are "cookie-cutter life stories," as Rabbi Emanuel Feldman describes them ("A Storied Life," summer 2002), leave us hardly informed and totally uninspired. I also agree with his criteria for judging a *gadol* story: "Is it unique or ordinary?" and so on. But his submission of "the story of Joseph and his brothers" as a model for the contemporary biography raises a number of serious questions.

After his caveat, "As part of Torah, it is more than narrative," he treats the story-line and its protagonists as though they were indeed characters in just another narrative, and asks all the right questions in that context: "One shudders to think how it would be written today. Would any contemporary religious writer dare mention that Joseph, in his youth, was concerned with his physical appearance?... Jacob's favoring one son over another?... Would Joseph's talebearing be omitted? Would not the story of Judah and Tamar be excised because it might offend—as would the story of Joseph and the wife of Potifar?" etc.

But this is Torah. And only because the Author of Torah deemed it to be print-worthy is it chronicled in such critical detail. By contrast, there is absolutely no license for any contemporary author to take the lid off any family's life, and examine the strife and apparent shortcomings of "Reb Joe and his bro"—or pick through the tensions and struggles of any *gadol* and his family. Yes, *Chazal* warn us not to favor one son over another, citing Joseph as an example. But no agenda of instruction or inspiration permits us to publicize the struggles or weaknesses of others, unless the Torah or *Chazal* have already done so. Yes, limitations of *shemiras halashon* restrict us even in regard to our reports and comments of those no longer alive.

Of even greater significance—and of utmost sensitivity—once we draw parallels between Joseph's internecine conflicts and our own squabbles, we inevitably equate him with us. "Joseph's talebearing...and the jealousy of the brothers" would be just another case of sibling rivalry—even though I am confident that Rabbi Feldman would never mean us to view it as anything of the sort.

My teachers and mentors constantly underscored the vast gulf that separates us from the *shevatim*, as from all personalities of *Tanach*—as no doubt did the teachers and mentors of Rabbi Feldman.

Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky, *zt"l*, described all of those whose lives and actions are chronicled in Scriptures as *malachim*—angels, no less, far beyond our comprehension. Rabbi Aaron Kotler, *zt"l*, instructed teachers of *tinokos shel beis rabban* similarly in a lecture at a Torah Umesorah gathering, published in *Mishnas Rav Aaron*, stressing that even Eisav was of a greatness beyond our reckoning. Rabbi Gedalya Schorr, *zt"l*, focused on the nature of the prize in the battle between Joseph and his brothers as *nitzchivus*—a key factor in the eternal destiny of the Jewish people—and Joseph's "concern with his physical appearance" as an expression of royal dignity, or a reflection of the ultimate manifestation of human perfection as personified by Adam and Jacob; not another case of adolescent narcissism. (Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, *zt"l*, expounds on the rivalry of Joseph and his brothers with his signature profundity in *Michtav MeEliyahu II*, pp. 219-229.)

We dare not risk belittling the like of Joseph and his brothers, by equating them with us in any fashion.

Writing a truly informative, instructive and inspiring biography of a *gadol* is a challenge—especially when one adheres to *halachah*-and-*hasbkafah*-based guidelines. But the challenge has been successfully met by some gifted writers, and there's no reason why it can't—or shouldn't—be met in the future.

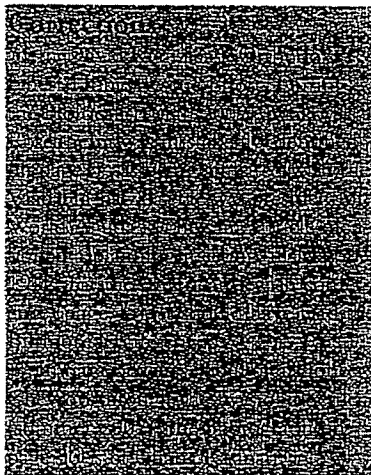
Rabbi Nisson Wolpin, editor
The Jewish Observer
New York

Rabbi Feldman responds

The responses to my essay indicate that a nerve was touched. The debate can only help raise the level of Orthodox biographies. As I indicated, some biographies have indeed been rigorous and perceptive, but these are not the majority.

Professor Domb, Rabbi Schick and Martin Stern all make significant points that amplify the issues involved, and I appreciate their kind words. The bulk of my response, however, will be devoted to Rabbi Wolpin, who raises the classic issue of how to read and interpret a Torah text.

I have no disagreement with Rabbi Wolpin on the major parameters of this subject. In fact, the ideas that Torah is not mere literature and that our patriarchs are not to be treated with the limiting measuring rods of ordinary mortals are the very concepts I tried to teach my congregants though decades of sermons—and they constitute a major theme in my 1986 book, *The Biblical Echo*. No less than five essays in that book are devoted to the profound layers of meaning within the Joseph narrative, and I believe that Rabbi Wolpin would not take issue with any of them. In addition, I recall vividly Rav Aharon Kotler's comments on how to study and teach the Torah; they had a seminal influence on my rabbinate and writing. In fact, my *Jewish Action* essay repeatedly states that the Joseph narrative "is more than a mere story," that its "multi-layered structure illuminates and instructs in



ways that we cannot fathom,” and that “to view it as mere literature would be to denigrate it.” It is therefore painful to me that, despite all this, the article seems to have given a different impression.

Perhaps our disagreement lies in our respective readings of the well-known dictum of the Sages that *“ein mikra yotzei midei peshuto”*—a verse does not lose its simple meaning” (*Shabbat* 63a). This means that although every word of Torah contains *shivim panim* (70 aspects) and *nun sha’arei binah* (50 gates of wisdom), the narratives of the Torah are also true on their elementary level. Furthermore, they are not only true on this level, they are *Torah*—meaning “teaching”—on this level as well.

What occurred in the Biblical narratives on the visible, “macro” level is true in accordance with how *Torah Shebeal Peh* explains it. In this view, the forefathers were spiritual giants who were never motivated by mundane or ordinary concerns—as the simple meaning of the text might occasionally lead us to believe. Nevertheless, the simple meaning of the text informs us that, at least on some elementary level, these spiritual giants also had certain mundane concerns. For if this were not so on a “micro” level, then the Torah would not have permitted the simple meaning of the verse to have given this impression—since *ein mikra yotzei midei peshuto*.

This explains why the Sages derive from the Joseph story that one should not pay excessive attention (*mesalsei*) to one’s hairstyle—basing themselves on the verse that Joseph acted like a youngster (*vehu na’ar*); or that a father should not favor one child over another—which is based on the special cloak which Yaakov gave his son Joseph. (See *Midrash Rabbah* 84 and many other commentaries on the text.) There are many other *midrashim* in which moral lessons are derived from the simple meaning of texts, even though the verses have more profound messages underlying them. This is

because there are layers and layers of meaning to each Biblical verse, from the simplest to the most profound and mysterious. But one of these layers is the simple meaning of the text. Thus, although the principals in the Joseph narrative behave in a way that is deeper than meets the eye, there nevertheless exists a valid layer that, in fact, merely meets the eye. That is to say, if the simple meaning of the text gives the surface impression of mundane human behavior, then that suggests that at some level, albeit a level perhaps indiscernible to anyone but God, mundane human behavior must have been at play. I would suggest, for example, that Radak’s portrayal of Yitzchak’s relationship with Esau, or Ramban’s reading of the relationship of Avraham and Sarah in the Avimelech episode, or the relationship of Yitzchak and Rivkah, are reflections of the view that “a verse does not lose its simple meaning.”

It is thus evident that we can indeed take the Torah as our model in writing biographies of great Jews. If the Torah teaches us that our forefathers were not perfect creatures (albeit on a micro level) then we, too, in presenting the life stories of contemporary great Jews—who are certainly not of the stature of our Biblical giants—should not feel it necessary to conceal any shortcomings if this helps instruct and inspire. My point was that by suggesting that our greatest contemporary leaders emerged as perfect creatures from the womb and remained perfect all their lives, the readership was being discouraged rather than uplifted—as Rabbi Schick points out in his letter—and that only the most naive reader would take these biographies seriously.

Rabbi Wolpin’s concerns about halachic constraints of *lashon hara* are well placed. It is a classic issue in *halachah* whether such constraints apply to incidents and facts that are well known, and where the clear intent is to instruct readers and not to denigrate the subject. And if, in fact, halachic constraints prevent us from relating the crucial inner struggles and

conflicts that might have been present in the lives of today’s great Jews, perhaps we should consider finding a name other than “biographies” with which to label a genre which has the noble purpose of uplifting and inspiring, but—because it cannot relate the entire, balanced story of a life—will not succeed in uplifting and inspiring.

The issue is certainly not clear-cut. One recalls Rav Yitzchak Hutner’s famous comment in his *Iggerot Ukesavim* in which he complains that in dealing with the lives of our great people, “the impression makes it seem as if they issued from the Hand of their Creator in their full stature and stance.... But who knows about their struggles, their failures, their falls and their regressions....” (For an insightful and invaluable discussion of the problems of dealing with the lives of our greatest people, see the Foreword to Rabbi Nathan Kamenetsky’s newly published work, *Making of a Godol*. This magnum opus is required reading for anyone interested in the Jewish religious history of the last 100 years.)

The issues raised by Rabbi Wolpin require much more space for a definitive discussion, but I am grateful to him for having brought to my attention the need to make at least this small clarification. **IA**

From the Archives

A protest by Rabbi Aaron Kotler against the trivialization and profanation of the Avos in "Chumash Motifs," an ongoing newspaper series.

This essay appeared in Warsaw's *Der Judische Togblatt*, Poland's only religious daily newspaper, 13 Nissan, 5695/April 16, 1935.

I was recently shown the last few issues of the newspaper *Heint*. How shocked I was to see the terrible blasphemies and the violation of the sanctity of our Holy Patriarchs and Matriarchs that they contained!

The laws of our Holy Torah obligate me to react to this unheard-of profanation of truth, *Chillul Sheim Shomaym* and violation of the dignity of the Jewish Nation. I thus feel compelled to depart from my usual practice and to issue the following public statement:

The holy forefathers—who were the most luminous, loftiest, and purest personalities, the holiest creatures—represent the foundation of eternal spiritual vitality, the wellsprings of chessed and the full range of positive attributes, for the entire world, for all of mankind. The Avos are, in fact, held in the highest esteem by every nation on earth. The worst enemies of the Jews did not dare tamper with their luminous and holy image.

How deep the shame and how profound the anguish, then, that this despicable blasphemy should appear in a Yiddish, so-called nationalistic paper! Worse yet is the shame that this very newspaper, which compromises every principle for financial gain, did not realize that its violation of the dignity of the Avos would arouse protest from its broadest circle of readers! This protest, besides curtailing this outrage, also serves as a source of encouragement to the religious community. Did the publishers really expect people to ignore such

defamation of the Creator, His Torah, and the holy Patriarchs, who form the very basis for the continued existence of *Klal Yisroel*?

The worst victims of this betrayal are our youth, for whom these stories are an insidious venom which can poison their entire way of thinking—especially in this era of widespread ignorance, when so many young people are not even vaguely familiar with what the *Chumash* writes

If we continue to tolerate such falsehoods in our homes, how can we continue to beseech G-d to answer our prayers in the merit of the very same Patriarchs and Matriarchs that these columns malign?

about the holy forefathers, and certainly do not know what *Chazal* say about them. They will instead learn about the Patriarchs from a *Heint* perspective, culled from the "Chumash Motifs," which are permeated with cynical ridicule and the spirit of the *Yevsekizja* (the Jewish Communist division).

Every Jew possessing a spark of

faith, to whom the honor of *Klal Yisroel* is dear, is thus forbidden to allow such heretical writings (which the *Rambam* deems worse than idolatry) to enter his home, so as not to transgress: "You shall not bring anything despicable into your home."

It must be emphasized that Torah law considers whoever reads this newspaper culpable as an accessory to a transgression, for this travesty is written and published with the reader in mind.

Every Jew must spare his household from the destructive influence of such literature. Moreover, if we continue to tolerate such falsehoods in our homes, how can we continue to beseech G-d to answer our prayers in the merit of the very same Patriarchs and Matriarchs that these columns malign?

Understandably, it is impossible to fully convey even one of the myriad facets of this subject in the confines of a letter. This inadequacy on our part, however, does not give us license to remain completely silent, either.

I appeal to *Rabbanim*, *Gaonim*, *Talmidei Chachamim*, as well as to ordinary G-d-fearing Jews to protest this sacrilege as strongly as possible!

Who knows but what our previous silence on other matters of outrage caused this present outrage to take place!

May *Hashem* heal the breaches within His People, and rebuild its spiritual ruins.

(signed) Aaron Kotler, *Resh Mesivta* of Kletzk, who writes these words and signs them, grieving over the shame inflicted on the Torah and the People of Israel!

Free translation by Rabbi Moshe Kolodny, director of the Orthodox Jewish Archives of Agudath Israel of America.

Jewish History

By Rav Shimon Schwab tz"l

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The story of Chanukah is described in detail in the Book of Maccabees. In the Gemorah and Midrash there are only a few scant references to this epic drama in our ancient history. Why is it that this great tale of heroism is so poorly treated by our Sages? The Book of Maccabees belongs to the Apocrypha, the Sefarim Chitzonim, which are not authentic and which are outside of our sacred literature. Why do our Chazal, who were the eyewitnesses of these tumultuous events of their era, not describe in detail the frivolities of the Hellenists, the ravings of the insane Antiochus and the rebellion of the Hasmoneans, as well as the miraculous victories of the "few over the many," of the weak over the multitude of the strong and the final triumph over the powerful army of Greco-Syria? Why did our Chachomim not leave us an account of the glory and of the final decay of the Maccabees? We have to glean almost every little bit from secular sources. Only a few sprinklings here and there are preserved for us in the words of our Chazal.

The question goes much further. We have no authentic description by our Tanaim of the period of the Churban, the Jewish war against the Romans, the destruction of the Jewish state, the revolt and the downfall of Bar Kochba, except for a few Haggadic sayings in Talmud and Midrash. For our historical knowledge we have to rely on the renegade, Josephus Flavius, who was a friend of Rome and a traitor to his people.

Come to think of it, since the close of the Tanach at the beginning of the Second Beis Hamikdash, we have no Jewish history book composed by our Sophrim, Tanaim and Amoraim. The prophets and the Anshei Knesses HaGedolah have recorded all the events of their days as well as all previous periods. When prophecy ceased, the recording of Jewish history stopped at the same time. Why did our great Torah leaders not deem it necessary to register in detail all the events of their period just as the Neviim had done before them?

We are bidden by the Torah to remember the days of yore and to contemplate the years of every generation. "Go ask your father and he shall tell you, and your elders and they shall speak about it." This Divine injunction was observed by our forefathers in Biblical times and the result is the Jewish history preserved in the Tanach. It is extremely difficult to understand why this was stopped.

There is a vast difference between history and storytelling. History must be truthful, otherwise it does not deserve its name. A book of history must report the bad with the good, the ugly with

the beautiful, the difficulties and the victories, the guilt and the virtue. Since it is supposed to be truthful, it cannot spare the righteous if he fails, and it cannot skip the virtues of the villain. For such is truth, all is told the way it happened. Only a Navi mandated by his Divine calling has the ability to report history as it really happened, unbiased and without prejudice.

Suppose one of us today would want to write a history of Orthodox Jewish life in pre-holocaust Germany. There is much to report but not everything is complimentary. Not all of the important people were flawless as one would like to believe and not all the mores and lifestyles of this bygone generation were beyond criticism. An historian has no right to take sides. He must report the stark truth and nothing but the truth. Now, if an historian would report truthfully what he witnessed, it would make a lot of people rightfully angry. He would violate the prohibition against spreading Loṣhon Horah which does not only apply to the living, but also to those who sleep in the dust and cannot defend themselves any more.

What ethical purpose is served by preserving a realistic historic picture? Nothing but the satisfaction of curiosity. We should tell ourselves and our children the good memories of the good people, their unshakeable faith, their staunch defense of tradition, their life of truth, their impeccable honesty, their boundless charity and their great reverence for Torah and Torah sages. What is gained by pointing out their inadequacies and their contradictions? We want to be inspired by their example and learn from their experience.

When Noach became intoxicated, his two sons Shem and Japhet, took a blanket and walked into his tent backwards to cover the nakedness of their father. Their desire was to always remember their father as the Tzaddik Tomim in spite of his momentary weakness. Rather than write the history of our forebears, every generation has to put a veil over the human failings of its' elders and glorify all the rest which is great and beautiful. That means we have to do without a real history book. We can do without. We do not need realism, we need *inspiration* from our forefathers in order to pass it on to posterity. And Torah-true "historians" do just that. There are very few Jewish history books on the market written in the spirit of Yiras Shomayim. They had to glean from the few available sacred sources enough material to teach us the important lessons of the past which should guide our actions and illuminate our Hashkofo.

In this connection, it is important to point out that we are speaking here only of Jewish history. The knowledge of world history is certainly extremely advantageous to the student. It shows clearly the workings of divine Hashgocho in the unfolding of the historical process.

As to the study of Biblical history, we have to learn the Tanach, which is part of the written Torah, together with the Oral Torah preserved in Talmud and Midrash. Reading the "Bible" without the commentaries of our Sages is like studying astronomy with the naked eye--without the use of a telescope. We are bound to misunderstand everything.

The "Author" of all human history is the Master of the world, steering mankind to the ultimate goal of Bias HaMashiach. The miracle of Chanukah was the first spark of this light which we pray shall soon rise upon Tzion.

YISROEL SALANTER ר' יצחק יצחק (1) תרס"ג

- א. לא כל מה שחושבים, יש להביע; לא כל מה שמביעים, יש לכתוב; לא כל מה שכותבים, יש להדפיס.
- ב. הכתיבה היא מהדברים הקלים ביותר, והמחיקה — מהקשים ביותר.
- ג. מי שלקוי בהסברתו, הריהו לקוי בהבנתו.
- ד. לא כל מי שיודע לנאום — נאם, כי אם מי שנואם — יודע לנאום.
- ה. בדאי לדרוש דרשה, אף אם תביא תועלת רק לאחד שיתפלל מעריב בכוונה ואף אם האחד אהיה אני בעצמי.
- ו. התנת מלמדת לחנוני את אומנותו.

DESSLER ר' (3) נחמן מנחם (2: ק"ט) מדות האבות

אמרו דיל (בראשית רבה מ"ז על הסטק מ"ז על אלקים מעל אברהם) יתאבות הן הן המרכבה, ועיון בגור אריה לך לך (יו"ט) שפירש י"ב על דם השכינה שורה בארץ, והשכינה היא עליהם, ולפיכך הם כסא לשכינה ומרכבתה, ויש בזה דברים עמוקים מאד. אבל המעט שניתן לנו להבין הוא, שהאבות הקדושים צ"ה זכו לדבק כל דעתם, לבם ותויתם בבורא יתי בלי שום המק כלל, וכל מציאתם היתה מסורה לה', עד בלי להשאיר מקום לצנזרותם, כל מחשבותיהם ומעשיהם היו אך ורק לעבודת השי"ת, עד שבכל דבורם ובכל תנאיוניהם, אף בענינים שגראים לעין כעסקי העולם הזה, היתה מתגלה קדושת השי"ת והשראת שכינתו, עד שהוא יתי יתור שבו עליהם כאמרו "אלקי אברהם אלקי יצחק ואלקי יעקב".

ומנקדת ראייה זו עלינו להתבונן על כל מה שמספרת התורה הקדושה מצויני האבות, כי בכל מעשה ומעשה שמספרת לנו התורה מצויניהם היא באה ללמדנו רגזת עליונות בדרכי עבודת השי"ת השלימה.

ANARON KATLER ר' (2) אהרן אהרן (179) כ' א"ת/כ"ן (ח' ז' מ' 179)

1. כשנזגשים לענין ישמעאל ויצחק, בהשגות השקפות של אנשים רגילים וכפרט כבוד
2. הוזה, אפשר לטעות שהיתה כאן תגרה בין שתי נשים על זכויות בניהן. אמרו להנלות זאת
3. על הדעת ומחשבת זו היא כפירה מפש. זה גם לא מתקבל על השכל כי הרי הקב"ה צוה
4. לאברהם לשמוע בקול שרה, ובסתם תגרה בין שתי נשים לא היה הקב"ה מצוה זאת.
5. ובכלל מעשי האבות, שכפי שאמרו היו יסודות לבנין עם ישראל והעולם כולו, לא יכלו
6. להיות מושפעים השפעה כל שהיא מנשיות ורעונות עצמיים. להבין ענין זה לפי כמות
7. ואיכות השנחנו, צריך לרעת שאין אבות אלא שלשה, ואילו היה פגם כל שהוא באבות,
8. צ"ה י"ז פגם רק מן הדק, היתה כל מציאות עם ישראל אחרת. מתן חוריה, הגאולה יום
9. הרין העתידים לבוא היו כבח ובהשפעת האבות על צאצאיהם. ידוע גם השפעת הסיבה
10. על האדם ואפילו על הגדול בענקים. מי לנו גדול מיעקב אבינו שרצה להתרחק מלבן ובניו
11. ורוך שלשת ימים וחזר למדו מזה שרוך שעבר בה רשע מוקח שלשת ימים. גם ידוע
12. שבכל שהאדם גורל יותר, השפעתו חזקה יותר. ישמעאל היה במדרגה גבוהה מאד בחכמה,

CHAIM DAVID HA'LEVI ר' (4) חיים דוד (ח"ה) חיים דוד

ובן לבני יעקב ויצחק (שנעקד ע"ג המזבח בחינת עולה חמימה). והקב"ה כדברו עם משה רבנו, אומר: וארא אל אברהם אל יצחק ואל יעקב בא"ל שדי (שמות ר' ג'). או אותו פסוק בחתלתו של משה רבינו: וזכור לאברהם ליצחק ולישראל עבדיך אשר נשבעת להם בן (שם ל"ב י"ב). ועוד פסוקים רבים כאלה. וכיצד עלה על ידעך להטיח דברים כה בוטים וקשים נגדם, אחרי שזכו שאלקים עצמו זכר אתם ונשבע להם, האם בכלל אתה מבין מה פירוש הדבר יארא אל אברהם אל יצחק ואל יעקב? האם ידוע לך כיצד צריך להראות אדם, שאלקים מדבר עמו.

וכן לגבי דוד (מחבר הלוקים גדולים מספר תהלים), שאחרי המעשה שציננת, נאמר עליו "משיח אלקי יעקב ונעים זמירות ישראל", והוא אומר על עצמו: רוח ה' דבר בו ומלתי על לשוני, אמר אלקי ישראל לי דבר צור ישראל וכד' (שמואל ב' כ"ג). כלומר שזכה לרוח הקדוש, ואם אתה מאמין לסיפורי התנ"ך עליה, הרי שחייב הנך להאמין גם ליתר הדברים שנאמרו עליו, ואם אמנם כך איך מלאך לבך להטיח דברים כה בוטים נגד "משיח אלקי יעקב".

אין זו חשובה ישירה, אלא נקודה מרכזית אחת בלבד, שכתבתי לך להעיר לך, לכל חושב גבוהה גבוהה, והרי לך חומר למחשבה מעמיקה, על עצם הסיפורים ותמיהותיהם עליהם, וכן על יתר שאלותיך במכתבך לא אוכל להשיבך בכתב כי אצטרך לך הסברים אישיים, והדברים ידועים, אם תסור לחלואיכם בהודמנות, אשמח לשוחח אתך על פה על הנשאים הנ"ל ואחרים.

גדולתם של אבות האומה

מכתבך מיום כ"ב כסלו גרם לי צער עמוק, משום שאחז אדם דתי, והכתרת את מכתבך "בסייעתא דשמיא", מעולם לא הייתי מעלה על דעתי שאדם דתי יחקף בתרופות כזאת ובטוים בוטים כאלה-את אבות-האומה ומלכיה.

אשיב לך בכתב על נקודה מרכזית אחת בלבד, אדם חילוני התוקף את אבות האומה בגין הסיפורים שסופר עליהם בתנ"ך, ניתן כהחלט להבינו, שהרי אין הוא מאמין בקדושת ספר-גז, ולדעתו אין הוא אלא מעשה ידי אדם, ולכן ניתן להטיק מסקנות כפי ששכלו של אדם מבין.

אבל אתה הלא דתי הנך, ומאמין שכל התורה כולה, כולה כמש, ללא יוצא מן הכלל, אפילו לא תיבה אחת, כולה נאמרה מפי הגבורה (ע"פ בהרמב"ם הלכות חושבה פרק ג' הלכה ח"ג). ומי שכתב סיפורים אלה בתורה על יהודה וראובן, הוא שהנציח את שםם כאבות האומה, וצוה לכתוב את שמותיהם על אבני האפוד, שנשא הכהן הגדול על לבו לפני ה' לזכרון (שמות כ"ח). וע"פ שם כרשי פסוק י"ב דבור המתחיל לזכרון, ואם הקב"ה החליט כך, מד לך אתה כי חלין?

גמול (י"ד) (5) R' SHIMSHON RAFAEL HIRSCH

The Torah never hides from us the faults, errors and weaknesses of our great men. Just by that it gives the stamp of veracity to what it relates. But in truth, by the knowledge which is given us of their faults and weaknesses, our great men are in no wise made lesser but actually greater and more instructive. If they stood before us as the purest models of perfection we should attribute them as having a different nature, which has been denied to us. Were they without passion without internal struggles, their virtues would seem to us the outcome of some higher nature, hardly a merit and certainly no model that we could hope to emulate. Take, for instance Moses's ענוה. Did we not know that he could also fly into a passion, his meekness and modesty would seem to us to be his inborn natural disposition, and lost to us as an example. Just his שמעו נא המורים gives his ענוה its true greatness, shows it to us as the result of a great work of self-control and self-ennoblement which we all should copy because we all could copy.

The Torah also shows us no faults without at the same time letting us see the greater or lesser evil consequences. From our great teachers of the Torah, and truly רמב"ן can be reckoned amongst the very greatest, we would accordingly learn that it may never be our task to whitewash the spiritual and moral heroes of our past, to appear as apologists for them. They do not require our apologies, nor do such attempts become them. Truth is the seal of our Torah, and truthfulness is the principle of all its true and great commentators and teachers. All this, if we would have to say with רמב"ן: חטא אברהם אבינו חטא גדול בשגגה.

גמול (כ"ט) (6) R' HIRSCH

V. 1 As repeatedly remarked, we follow the opinion of our sages, and do not consider it our task to be apologists for our great men and women, just as the Word of God, the Torah itself never refrains from informing us of their errors and weaknesses. If Rebecca brought it about that Jacob deceived his father, it says quite unequivocally במרמה. Reb. Chanina expresses himself about the events recorded in this chapter, as follows: - "כך מי שאומר הב"ה ותרן הוא (67 ב"ר) that God is not so particular with His "pious ones", that "frum" people need not be so particular in certain directions, "יותרון מעיו", "deserves to have his inwards torn out" זעקה אחת הזעיק יעקב "אז לא מאריך רוחיה וגבי דיליה, זעקה אחת הזעיק ויעקב זעקה גדולה ומרה (Esther IV.1 and Gen. XXVII. 34), the forbearance of God grants long credit but the debt has to be paid in the end; one cry Jacob caused Esau to make, and that was repaid in Shushan when Esau's descendant caused Jacob's descendant "to cry with a loud and bitter cry" ג' דמעות "three tears" it says in Tanchuma הוריד עשו אחת מימינו ואחת משמאלו ואחת נסתלקה בתוך עינו והיא האכילתם שליש הוריד עשו אחת מימינו ואחת משמאלו ואחת נסתלקה בתוך עינו והיא האכילתם שליש "three tears did Esau shed, one dropped out of his right eye, one from his left, and the third he kept back, and that one, the bitterest that he did not drop, salted our bread of exile with tears and made us taste tears in full threefold measure". But if quiet thoughtful considerations of this event force one to conclusions that would remove a great deal of its bitterness, we do not think that we should refrain from giving them in order to avoid our appearing as apologists. Enough will still remain which can not be approved of, especially when measured with the yard-stick of character of a nation whose name of honour is ישורן, which is only to achieve its purposes in the "straight" (ישר) way, and is to oppose any crooked means for any purpose.

יום ב' לד"ח אייר תשכ"ג.

אהובי חביבי,
שלום וברכה!

מכתבך היגע לידי. ודברך היגע ללבי. דע לך חביבי כי עצם מכתבך מתנגד הוא לכל התאורים הנמצאים בו. והגני בזה להסביר לך תוכן משפט זה. דעה חולה היא אצלנו שכאשר מתעסקים אנו בצדדי השלימות של גדולנו, הגנו מטפלים בסיכום האחרון של מעלתם. מספרים אנו על דרכי השלימות שלהם, בשעה שאנחנו מדלגים על המאבק הפנימי שהתחולל בנפשם. הרושם של שיתחנו על הגדולים מתקבל כאילו יצאו מתחת יד היוצר בקומתם ובציבונם. הכל משוחחחים, מתפעלים ומרימים על גס את טהרת הלשון של בעל החפץ-חיים זצ"ל, אבל מי יודע מן כל המלחמות, המאבקים, המכשולים, הנפילות, והנסיגות לאחור שמצא החפץ-חיים בדרך המלחמה שלו עם יצרו הדיע, משל אחד מני אלף. ודי לבנו שכמותך לדון מן הפרט אל הכלל. התוצאה מזה היא כשנער בעל רוח, בעל שאיפה, בעל תסיסה מוצא בעצמו מכשולים, נפילות, ירדות הדי הוא דומה בעיניו כבלתי-שנתול בבית השם". שלפי דמיונות של נער זה להיות שתול בבית השם, מירושו הוא לשבת בשלות הנפש על נאות דשא של מי מנוחות ולהיות מוצאו הטוב כדרך שצדיקים נהנים מזיו השכינה שעטותיהם בראשיהם במסיבת גן-עדן. ולאורך גיסא, לא להיות מורגז מסירת היצר על דרך הכתוב של "במותם חפשי" ¹.

אבל דע לך, חביבי, ששורש גשמתך הוא לא השלטה של היצר-טוב, אלא דוקא **מלחמתו** של היצר-טוב. ומכתבך היקר הולבב מעיד כמאה עדים כי אכן לוחם נאמן אתה בצבאותיו של היצר-טוב. באנגלית אומרים *Lose a battle and win the war* ². בודאי שהגך נכשל ועומד להיות נכשל, (אין בזה משום פתיחת פה לשטן) וככמה מערכות תפול שדוד. אבל אני מבטיח לך שלאחר הפסד כל המערכות תצא מן המלחמה כשור הנצחון. *Lose battles, but win wars*. על ראשך, והטרף החד מפרפר בין שיניך. *Lose battles, but win wars*. החכם מכל אדם אמר "שבע יפול צדיק וקם" ³. והטפשים חושבים כי כונתו בדרך רבותא. אע"פ ששבע יפול צדיק מ"מ הוא קם. אבל החכמים יודעים היטב שהכונה היא שמהות הקימה של הצדיק היא דרך ה"שבע נפילות" שלו. וירא את כל אשר עשה והנה טוב מאד. טוב זה יצר טוב. מאד זה יצר הרע ⁴.

אהובי, הגני לוחץ אותך אל לבי, ולוחש באוזניך, כי אילו היה מכתבך מספר לי על אודות המצוות ומעשים טובים שלך הייתי אומר שקבלתי ממך מכתב טוב. עכשו שמכתבך מספר על דבר ירדות ונפילות ומכשולים, הנני אומר שקבלתי ממך מכתב טוב מאד. הרוך סוערת

לקראת השאיפה להיות גדול. בבקשה ממך אל תצייר לעצמך גדולים שהם יצרם הטוב בבחינת חד-הוא. לעומת זאת צייר בנפשך גדלות של גדולי עולם באותיות של מלחמה מראה עם כל הנטיות השפלות והתמוכות. ובזמן שהגך מרגיש בקרבך סערת-היצר, דע לך שבוה הגך מתדמה אל הגדלים הרבה יותר מאשר בשעה שאתה נמצא במנוחה שלימה שאתה רוצה בה. דוקא באותם המקומות שהגך מוצא בעצמו הירדות הכי מרובות, דוקא באותם המקומות עומד הגך להיות כלי להצטיינות של כבוד שמים.

איך רוצה לגנוב את דעתך, שאחשוב עליך שהגך נמצא בקו הטוב בעוד שבאמת הגך כך וקר, ועוד כך ושבע פעמים כך. ואני מה לי לכל השבע פעמים הללו. בשבילי עובדת היסוד היא כי במשך החורף העבר רכשת לך דיעה הגונה בהלכות נוקי ממון. חזרת כמה פעמים על המס' שלמדות. לא תכחיש את זה. זו היא העובדה המכריעה. בעובדא זו גנוו סוד הנצחון במאבק היצרים שלך.

הגך כותב "לעולם לא אשכח הרצון שהיה בי להצליח ולעלות מחוץ אל חיל, אבל חבל כבר אבדה תקותי". אינני יודע כיצד אתה מעיז פנים להכחיש מציאות חיה, האם אתה לא עלית מחיל אל חיל מאותו זמן שנכנסת לבית מדרש? מכיר אני אותך שאינך בעל-העזה כזה, אלא שהם הם הדברים, אם מוצא אתה בעצמך שיצרך הרע מתגבר עליך, הגך חושב בטפשותך ובתמימותך שכבר אבדה תקותך. דברך פשוט מביאים לידי גיחוך. משתתף אני בסבלך הרע, אבל הסבל הזה הוא הגך הרחם של הגדלות. ראיתי את פניך בשעת עיון בהלכה. ראיתי את פניך בשעת הקשבה לשעוריהם. ראיתי את פניך כליל שביעי של פסה. האותיות החרותות על פניך בשעות הני"ל הן אותיות של "סוף הכבוד לבוא". אין שביל הכבוד מתפתל דרך מישור; שביל הכבוד עובר מסתובב כנחש עליו דרך, וכשפופון עליו אורח. ארס: של נחש בקרבך? - הוא ישופו, עקב ואתה תשופנו ראש.

מצאתי לנכון להציע לך דברים הללו בכתב. הכונה היא לתת לך יכולת להזדקק להם מדי פעם בפעם. מובן מאלין שמפאת זה לא היתה הכונה אלא להקו הכללי. ובונוע לנקודות פרטיות, בזה יפה כוונו של היצור החי פנים אל פנים.

אתה הוא השתול בבית השם!
בהשתתפות בסבלך,
בבטחון בנצחונך,
בתפלה להצלחתך
יצחק הוטנר
גב. עכשו הגך מבין את המשפט הראשון של המכתב, כי עצם

יצחק הוטנר (20.5)

"Our trouble is that when we are engrossed in the facets of wholeness of our greats, we deal with the completed form of their qualities and skip over the inner struggle that transpired in their spirit. The impression left by our talks about the great leaders makes it seem as if they issued from the Hand of the Creator in their full stature and stance. Everyone speaks of, and is moved by, the example of the purity of the tongue (in avoidance of *leshon hara*) of the author of 'חפץ חיים'; but who knows - say, one in a thousand - about all the wars, the struggles, the failures, the falls and the regressions the Chafetz-Chaim encountered in his path of

(4)

8) סנהדרין (1N):

The Gemara attempts to prove that the main purpose of burial is to avoid disgrace:

Come, learn a proof from the fact that righteous people (e.g. the Patriarchs) were buried. ואי אמרת - Now, if you say that the purpose of burial is atonement, you will be faced with a difficulty: צדיקי לכפרה - Were these righteous people really in need of atonement?

The Gemara responds:

Yes, they did require atonement, אךם אין צדיק דכתיב, אךם אין צדיק - for it is written: There is not a righteous man on earth who does [only] good and never sins. Thus, it is possible that atonement is indeed the main purpose of burial.

9) סנהדרין (1A):

לכך אני - אמר להן [R' Akiva] said to [the other students]: כל זמן שאני - משחק - "For that [very reason] I am laughing! Indeed, as long as I saw my master, R' Eliezer, prospering - שאין יינו מחמיץ - for his wine does not ferment and turn into vinegar, ואין פשתנו לוקה - his flax is not smitten by hail or blight, ואין שמנו מבאיש - his oil does not turn rancid, ואין דובשנו מדביש - and his honey does not spoil - אמרתי שמיא חס ושלום קיבל רבי עולמה - I said to myself, 'Perhaps, God forbid, my master has already received his world' (i.e. the full measure of reward for his righteousness deeds in this world). But now that I see my master in pain, אני שמח - I rejoice." [43] אמר לו - אמר לו [R' Eliezer] then said to [R' Akiva]: עקיבא בלום חיסרתי מן התורה בולה - Akiva! Is there any precept that I have omitted, i.e. failed to fulfill, from the entire Torah? Why do you assume that my suffering is due to my sins? What sins have I committed? אמר - אמר [R' Akiva] said to [R' Eliezer] in reply: כי - Our master (i.e. Eliezer) has taught us the verse: For there is not a righteous man on earth who has done good and never sinned; hence, you must have some imperfection for which you are now suffering." [45]

10) קהלת (5):

17 And Abraham threw himself upon his face and laughed; * and he thought, "Shall a child be born to a hundred-year-old man? And shall Sarah - a ninety-year-old woman - give birth?" 18 And Abraham said to God, "O that Ishmael might live before You!" 19 God said, "Nonetheless, your wife Sarah will bear you a son and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will fulfill My covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. 20 But regarding Ishmael I have heard you: I have blessed him, will make him fruitful, and will increase him most exceedingly; he will beget twelve princes and I will make him into a great nation. 21 But I will maintain My covenant through Isaac whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year." 22 And when He had finished speaking with him, God ascended from upon Abraham.

23 Then Abraham took his son Ishmael and all those servants born in his household and all those he had purchased for money - all the male members of Abraham's house - and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskin on that very day as God had spoken with him. 24 Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised on the flesh of his foreskin; 25 and his son Ishmael was thirteen years old when he was circumcised on the flesh of his foreskin. 26 On that very day was Abraham circumcised with Ishmael his son, 27 and all the people of his household, born in his household and purchased for money from a stranger, were circumcised with him.

ויפול אברהם על-פניו. ויצחק ויאמר בלבו הלבן מאה שנה ויולד ואם שרה תשעים שנה תלד: ויאמר אברהם אל-האלהים לו ישמעאל יהיה לפניך: ויאמר אלהים אבל שרה אשתך ילדת לך בן וקראת את-שמו ויצחק ונקמתני את-ברייתי אתו לברית עולם ולזרעו אחריו: ולישמעאל שמעתיך הזה ברכתי אתו והפרייתי אתו והרבייתי אתו במאד מאד שנים עשר נשיאם ויליד ונתתיו לגוי גדול: ואת-ברייתי אקים את-יצחק אשר תלד לך שרה למועד הזה בשנה האחרת: ויכל לדבר אתו ויעל אלהים מעל אברהם: וינח אברהם את-ישמעאל בנו ואת פל-ילדי ביתו ואת כל-מקנת כספו כל-זכר באנשי בית אברהם וימל את-בשר ערלתם בעצם היום הזה באשר דבר אתו אלהים: ואברהם בן-תשעים ותשע שנה בהמלו בשר ערלתו: וישמעאל בנו בן-שלוש עשרה שנה בהמלו את בשר ערלתו: בעצם היום הזה נמול אברהם וישמעאל בנו: וכל-אנשי ביתו ויליד ביתו ומקנת כסף מאת בן-נכר נמלו אתו: פפפ

11) בראשית (6): MIDRASH

6. AND HE LEFT OFF TALKING WITH HIM. It was taught: He who departs from his neighbour, whether he is greater or smaller than he, must ask leave of him. From whom do we learn it? From Abraham. On one occasion Abraham was speaking to God, when the ministering angels came to speak to him. Said he to them, 'Let us take leave of the Shechinah, which is greater than you, and then I will speak with you.' When he had spoken with God all that he needed, he said to Him, 'Sovereign of the Universe!

I have need to speak [with the angels].' 'Then let Me take leave [of thee] in peace,' replied He. Thus it is written, AND GOD WENT UP FROM ABRAHAM.¹

Resh Lakish said: The Patriarchs are [God's] Heavenly Chariot. Thus it is written, AND GOD WENT UP FROM UPON ABRAHAM; again, And God went up from upon him (Gen. xxxv, 13); further, And, behold, the Lord stood upon him (ib. xxviii, 13).²

1. (כב) ויכל לדבר אתו הני הנפטר מחברו בין גדול בין קטן צריך לטל ממנו רשות ממי את למד מאברהם פעם אחת הנה אברהם מדבר עם הקדוש ברוך הוא באו מלאכי השרת לדבר עמו אמר להן נפטר מן השכינה שהיא גדולה מכם תחלה אחר כך אני מדבר עמכם בין שדבר עם הקדוש ברוך הוא כל צרכו אמר לפניו רבון העולמים צריך אני לדבר אמר לו הפטר השלום הדיא הוא דכתיב ויעל אלהים מעל אברהם אמר ריש לקיש האבות הן הן המרכבה שנאמר ויעל אלהים מעל אברהם (בראשית לה. יג) ויעל מעליו אלהים (שם כח. יג) ויהנה ה'

12 סנהדרין (א.ד.ו.)

A Baraisa of the academy of R' Yishmael has taught the following exposition: "וּבְפִטוּשׁ יִבְצֵץ סֵלַע" - AND LIKE A HAMMER THAT A ROCK SHATTERS. [25] This teaches that מִדָּה JUST AS THIS HAMMER DISINTEGRATES INTO MANY PARTICLES, אַף מִקְרָא אֶחָד יוֹצֵא לְבִמְה טַעְמִים - SO TOO ONE VERSE YIELDS MANY TEACHINGS.

13 אבן עזר (ב.ר.נ.)

The Gemara defends the proof: The Gemara defends the proof: [Mar, the son of Rav Huna] said to [Rav Kahana]: אין מקרא יוצא מידי פשוטו - A verse never departs from its plain meaning. [21]

Rav Kahana accepts this point:

Rav Kahana said: אמר רב כהנא בדי הוינא בר תמני סרי שנין ונהו גמירנא ליה לכוליה - I had learned the entire Talmud, [22] ולא ונהו נדענא דאין מקרא יוצא מידי פשוטו עד השתא - but I did not know that a verse never departs from its plain meaning until now.

The Gemara draws a lesson from this statement:

דליגמר - What does [Rav Kahana] teach us? מאי קא משמע לן - That a person should first learn, and afterward reason. [23]

14 Midrash נחל וקה

אל נא תקברני במצרים למה שסופה של ארץ מצרים ללקות בכנים ויהיו מרחישות בתוך גופי לפיכך אל נא תקברני במצרים. דבר אחר מפני מה בקש יעקב אבינו שלא יקבר במצרים שלא יעשו אותו עבודת כוכבים ששם שופרעין מן העובד כך נפרעין מן הנעבד

15 (פרשת ח.ה.)

The Gemara continues its discussion of Abraham: R' Abahu said in the name of R' Elazar: מפני מה נענש אברהם אבינו ונשפדו בניו למצרים מאתים ועשר - that his children were enslaved in Egypt for two hundred and ten years? [34] מפני שעשה אנגרייא בתלמידי חכמים - Because he conscripted Torah scholars to aid him in the war against the four kings, [35] ונרק - as it is stated: שפדו את בני ביתי - and he mobilized his trained men, those who were born in his house. [36]

16 Midrash גמולא (ל.ו.א.)

וַיָּגֵשׁ אֵלָיו יְהוָה. זֶה שְׂאֵמֶר הַקְּטוּב. בני אש-ערבית לרעה תפקע לך כפיה (בסל' ו. א.). בשעה שבקש הקדוש-ברוך-הוא למן את התורה לישראל, אמר להו, תקבלו תורת. אמרו לו, הן אמר להם, תנו לי ערב שתקמו אותה. אמרו לו, אברהם יצחק ויעקב יהיו ערבים. אמר להו, אבותיכם הן בעצמם צריכים ערבים. אברהם אמר, במה אדע (ברא' טו. ה.). יצחק אהב את שונאי, דכתיב, ואת-עשו שונאתי (מלאכי א. ג.). יעקב אמר, נסתרה דרכי (ישעי' מכה). אמרו לו, בנינו יהיו ערבים שנגו. מיד קבלן הקדוש-ברוך-הוא ונמן את התורה לישראל, שנאמר, מפי עוללים ויונקים יסדת עו (תהלים ח. א.). לפיכך פשישראל מבטלן את התורה, הקדוש-ברוך-הוא פורע מן הערבי, שנאמר, ותשפח תורת אלתיך אשפח בניה גס-אני (הושע ד. ו.). מהו גס-אני. אמר הקדוש-ברוך-הוא, אף אני מצטער עליהם שאני מפסידן, שהם אומרים בכל יום, ברוך ה' המבורך לעולם ועד. הני, אש-ערבית לרעה. אף יהודה לפי שהיה ערב של בנימין, לפיכך לא עמד מכל השבטים כנגד יוסף אלא יהודה, שנאמר, ויגש אליו יהודה.

A second opinion: מפני שהפריו על מדותיו של - But Shmuel said: Abraham was punished because he presumed to ask for confirmation concerning the decrees of God, [37] - How am I to know that I will inherit it? [38]

A third opinion: And R' Yochanan said: מפני שהפריו בני אדם - Abraham was punished because he distanced people from being able to enter under the wings of the Divine Presence, שנאמר - as it is stated: [39] "תן-לי - Give me the people and take the possessions for yourself. By consenting to allow the prisoners of war to remain in the possession of the king of Sodom, Abraham missed an opportunity to teach them the ways of Hashem. [40]

(17) מדרש (יז)

¹⁴ HASHEM said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Raise now your eyes and look out from where you are: northward, southward, eastward and westward. ¹⁵ For all the land that you see, to you will I give it, and to your descendants forever. ¹⁶ I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth so that if one can count the dust of the earth, then your offspring, too, can be counted. ¹⁷ Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth! For to you will I give it." ¹⁸ And Abram moved his tent and came and dwelled in the plains of Mamre which are in Hebron; and he built there an altar to HASHEM.

: ויהוה אמר אל-אברהם אחר-כי הפך לוט מעמו שא-נא עיניך וראה מן-המקום אשר-אתה שם צפנה ונגבה וקדמה וימה: כי את-כל-הארץ אשר-אתה ראה לך אתננה ולרעה עד-עולם: ושמתי את-זרעך בעפר הארץ אשר | אם-יוכל איש למנות את-עפר הארץ גם זרעך ימנה: קים התחלק בארץ לארפה ולרחבה פי לך אתננה: ויאהל אברהם ויבא וישב באילני ממרא אשר בחברון ויבן-שם מזבח ליהוה:

MIDRASH (18) מדרש (יח)

ח. (יד-טו) ויה' אמר אל אברהם וגו' ר' יודה אומר פעם הנה לאבינו אברהם בשעה שפרש לוט בן אחיו מעמו אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא לכל הוא מדבק וללוט אחיו אינו מדבק רבי נחמיה אמר פעם הנה לו להקדוש ברוך הוא בשעה שהנה מהלך לוט עם אברהם אבינו אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא אני אמרתי לו (בראשית טו, יח) 'לזרעה נתתי את הארץ הזאת' והוא מדביק את לוט בן אחיו כדי לזרשו אם בן ילך ויביא לו שני פרסתקין מן השוק ויורישם את שלו כמו שהוא רוצה בן אחיו הדא הוא דכתיב (משלי כב, י) 'גרש לץ ויצא מדון' גרש לץ זה לוט ויצא מדון

(19) מדרש (יט)

²⁷ So Abraham took flocks and cattle and gave them to Abimelech; and the two of them entered into a covenant. ²⁸ Abraham set seven ewes of the flock by themselves. ²⁹ And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What are these seven ewes which you have set by themselves?" ³⁰ And he replied, "Because you are to take these seven ewes from me, hat it may serve me as testimony that I dug this well." ³¹ Therefore that place was called Beer-sheba because there the two of them took an oath.

. ויקח אברהם צאן ויבקר ויתן לאבימלך ויכרתו שניהם ברית: ויצב אברהם את-שבע כבשת הצאן לבדן: ויאמר אבימלך אל-אברהם מה הנה שבע כבשת האלה אשר הצבת לבדן: ויאמר פי את-שבע כבשת תקח מדי בעבור תהיה לי לענה פי חפרתי את-הבאר הזאת: על-כן קרא למקום ההוא באר שבע פי שם נשבעו שניהם:

MIDRASH (20) מדרש (כ)

ד. (כד-כט) ויקח אברהם צאן ויבקר ויתן לאבימלך ויאמר אבימלך לאברהם מה הנה שבע כבשת אמר לו

הקדוש ברוך הוא אתה נתת שבע כבשות בלי רצוני חייך שאני משהה בשמחת בניך שבעה דורות אתה נתת לו שבע כבשות בלי רצוני חייך כנגד בן הורגים מבניך שבעה צדיקים ואלו הן חפני ופינחס ושמשון ושאול ושלשת בניו אתה נתת לו שבע כבשות בלי רצוני כנגד בן בניו מתריבין מבניך שבעה משפנות ואלו הן אהל מועד וגלגל נוב וגבעון ושילה ובית עולםים תרין אתה נתת לו

³ So Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her maidservant — after ten years of Abram's dwelling in the land of Canaan — and gave her to Abram her husband, to him as a wife. ⁴ He consorted with Hagar and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was lowered in her esteem. ⁵ So Sarai said to Abram, "The outrage against me is due to you! It was I who gave my maidservant into your bosom, and when she saw that she had conceived, I became lowered in her esteem. Let HASHEM judge between me and you!"

⁶ Abram said to Sarai, "Behold! — your maidservant is in your hand; do to her as you see fit." And Sarai dealt harshly with her, so she fled from her.

⁷ An angel of HASHEM found her by the spring of water in the desert, at the spring on the road to Shur. ⁸ And he said, "Hagar, maidservant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" And she said, "I am running away from Sarai my mistress."

⁹ And an angel of HASHEM said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her domination."

¹⁰ And an angel of HASHEM said to her, "I will greatly increase your offspring, and they will not be counted for abundance."

¹¹ And an angel of HASHEM said to her, "Behold, you will conceive, and give birth to a son; you shall name him Ishmael, for HASHEM has heard your prayer.

¹² And he shall be a wild-ass of a man: his hand against everyone, and everyone's hand against him; and over all his brothers shall he dwell."

¹³ And she called the Name of HASHEM Who spoke to her "You are the God of Vision," for she said, "Could I have seen even here after having seen?"

¹⁴ Therefore the well was called "The Well of the Living One Appearing to Me." It is between Kadesh and Bered.

¹⁵ Hagar bore Abram a son and Abram called the name of his son that Hagar bore him Ishmael. ¹⁶ And Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

וַתִּקַּח שָׂרַי אִשְׁת־אַבְרָם אֶת־הַגֵּר הַמִּצְרִית שִׁפְחָתָהּ מִקֶּץ עֶשְׂרֵי שָׁנִים לְשִׁבְת־אַבְרָם בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַתִּתֵּן אֹתָהּ לְאַבְרָם אִשָּׁה לּוֹ לְאִשָּׁה: וַיָּבֵא אֶל־הַגֵּר וַתְּהַר וַתֵּרָא כִּי הִרְתָּה וַתִּקַּל גְּבֻרָתָהּ בְּעֵינֶיהָ: וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרַי אֶל־אַבְרָם חֲמִסִּי עָלַיךָ אֲנֹכִי נָתַתִּי שִׁפְחָתִי בְּחִיקְךָ וַתֵּרָא כִּי הִרְתָּה וַאֲקַל בְּעֵינֶיהָ יִשְׁפֹּט יְהוָה בֵּינִי *וּבֵינֶיךָ: וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם אֶל־שָׂרַי הֲנִיָּה שִׁפְחָתְךָ בְּיָדְךָ עֲשִׂי־לָהּ הַטּוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ וַתַּעֲנֶה שָׂרַי וַתִּבְרַח מִפְּנֵיהָ: וַיִּמְצָאָהּ מִלְּאָן יְהוָה עַל־עֵינַי הַמַּיִם בְּמִדְבָּר עַל־הָעֵזִן בְּדֶרֶךְ שׁוּר: וַיֹּאמֶר הַגֵּר שִׁפְחָת שָׂרַי אֵי־מִזָּה בָּאת וְאָנֹכִי תֹלְכִי וַתֹּאמֶר מִפְּנֵי שָׂרַי גְּבֻרָתִי אֲנֹכִי בִּרְחַת: וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מִלְּאָן יְהוָה שׁוֹבִי אֶל־גְּבֻרָתְךָ וְהִתְעַנִּי תַּחַת יָדֶיהָ: וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מִלְּאָן יְהוָה הֲרָה הֲרָבָה אֲרָבָה אֶת־זַרְעֲךָ וְלֹא יִסְפָּר מִרְבִּי: וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מִלְּאָן יְהוָה הֲרָה וְיִלְדֶת בֶּן וְקָרָאת שְׁמוֹ יִשְׁמָעֵאל כִּי־שָׁמַע יְהוָה אֶל־עֲנִיָּךְ: וְהוּא יְהִיֶּה פָּרָא אָדָם יָדוּ בְּכָל־יָד בּוֹ וְעַל־פְּנֵי כָל־אָחָיו יִשְׁכָּן: וַתִּקְרָא שֵׁם־יְהוָה הַדֹּבֵר אֵלֶיהָ אֲתָה אֵל רָאִי כִּי אָמַרְהָ הַגֵּם הַלֵּם רָאִיתִי אֲחֵרֵי רָאִי: עַל־כֵּן קָרָא לְבָאָר בְּאֶרֶץ לְחַי רָאִי הִנֵּה בֵּין־קַדְשׁ וּבֵין בְּרֵד: וַתִּלְדֶּה הַגֵּר לְאַבְרָם בֶּן וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָם שֵׁם־בְּנֵוֹ אֶשְׁרֵ־יִלְדָה הַגֵּר וַיִּשְׁמָעֵאל: וְאַבְרָם בֶּן־שְׁמֹנִים שָׁנָה וָשֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים בְּלֶדֶת־הַגֵּר אֶת־יִשְׁמָעֵאל לְאַבְרָם:

RADAK (23) רַדָּק (הַרְאָה לֵב) (7)

(כו) ויבא כי לא יוכל לו, שלא יוכל להפילו, ויגע בכף ירכו, ומז לו שעשו לא יוכל לו אכל הוא יכאב מצד אחר, מצד ירכו, רמז לו כזה שיכאב מאחד מיוצאי ירכו, והוא בתו שנבעלה לכנעני, לפיכך גע בכף הירך כי כף לשון נקבה, וכל זה הבין יעקב ממעשה המלאך אכל דבר בתו אפשר שלא הבין כאשר היה עד...⁴³ כי חשב אפשר שתחלה או תמות. וכל המעשה הזה אפשר שהיה במראה הנבואה בחלום, ואף על פי שמצא עצמו צולע בהקיץ, היה לו מאח האל להיות בו זה לאור לפי שהיה פוסח במחשבתו אחר כמה הבטחות אשר עשה עמו האל, כדה כנגד מדה להיות פוסח כנגפו, כי אף על פי שלבו היה שלם יבטח באל בכל לבו אלא שחשב שמה יגרום החטא, אף על פי כן אחר כמה הבטחות לא היה לו להרתר ולחוש לעשו ולקראו כמה פעמים ארני, ולשלות לו מנתה גדולה ולהשתתות לו כמה פעמים, וכוה חטא ושלם לו האל בזה העולם ולקה בגופו עונשו מחשבתו, ואם תרצה תאמר כי המעשה הזה היה בהקיץ ממש ולא היה אלא רמיון לבד שנדמה לו איש ולא היה, כמו שנאמר

RADAK (22) רַדָּק (22) (22)

(1) ויאמר... שפחתך בידך, אע"פ ששכבה בחיקי, שפחתך היא כבתחלה ויש לך רשות עליה לרדותה אם תעשה אליך דבר שלא כהוגן, כי שפחתך היא ורשותה בידך ולא תקבל ממני כמו שתקבל ממך והבני מוחל לך כבודי. והענה שרי, עשתה עמה יותר מראי ועבדה בה כפרך, ואפשר שהיתה מכה אותה ומקללת אותה ולא היתה יכולה לסכול וכרחה מפניה. ולא נהגה שרי בזה לא מדת מוסר ולא מדת חסידות; לא מוסר כי אף על פי שאברהם מחל לה על כבודך ואמר לה: עשי לה הטוב בעיניך, היה ראוי לה למשוך אח ידה לכבודו ולא לענותה, ולא מידת חסידות ונפש טובה, כי אין ראוי לאדם לעשות כל יכולתו כמה שתחת ידו. ואמר החכם⁴⁰: "ומה נאה המחילה בעת היכולת". זה שעשתה שרי לא היה טוב בעיני האל, כמו שאמר המלאך להגד: כי שמע ה' אל עניך (פסוק י), והשיב לה ברכה תחת ענייה. ואברהם לא מנע שרי מלענותה אף על פי שהיה רע כעניו משום שלום הבית. וכל זה הסיפור נכתב בתורה לקנות אדם ממנו המדות הטובות ולהרחיק הרעות.

10. AND THERE WAS A FAMINE IN THE LAND. Now Abraham went down to Egypt on account of the famine to dwell there in order to keep himself alive in the days of the drought, but the Egyptians oppressed him for no reason [and attempted] to take his wife. The Holy One, blessed be He, avenged their cause with great plagues, and brought him forth from there with cattle, with silver, and with gold,⁶⁹ and Pharaoh even commanded his men to escort them from the land.⁷⁰ He thereby alluded to Abraham that his children would go down to Egypt on account of the famine to dwell there in the land, and the Egyptians would do them evil and take the women⁷¹ from them, just as Pharaoh said, *And every daughter ye shall save alive,*⁷² but the Holy One, blessed be He, would avenge their cause with great plagues until He would bring them forth with silver and gold, sheep and oxen, very rich in cattle, with the Egyptians pressuring to send them out of the land.⁷³ Nothing was lacking in all the events that happened to the patriarch that would not occur to the children.

RAMBAN (24) (אליהו י:א)

(י) והי רעב בארץ. הנה אברהם ירד למצרים מפני הרעב לגור שם להחיות נפשו בימי הצמחון³⁷ המצרים עשקו אותו הנס לקחה את אשתו, והקבי"ה נקם נקמתם בנגעים גדולים והוציאו משם במקנה בכסף ובהב, וגם צוה עלי פרעה אנשים לשלחם. וירמו אלה כי בניו ירדו מצרים מפני הרעב לגור שם בארץ המצרים ירעו להם ויקחו מהם הנשים³⁸, כאשר אמר וכל הבת תחיון (שמות א כב). והקבי"ה ינקום נקמתם בנגעים גדולים עד שיציאם בכסף וזהב וצאן ובקר מקנה כבד מאד³⁹, והחזיקו בהם לשלחם מן הארץ⁴⁰, לא נפל דבר מכל מאורע האב שלא יהיה כפי"ה. והענין הזה פרשוהו בבראשית רבה⁴¹. רבי פנחס כשם רבי ארשיא⁴², אמר הקבי"ה לאברהם צא וכבוש את הדרך לפני בך. ואתה מוצא כל מה שכתוב באברהם כתוב בבניו, באברהם נחב רעב והי רעב בארץ. בישראל כתיב כי זה שנתים הרעב בקרב הארץ (להלן מה ו). ורע כי אברהם אבינו חטא חטא גדול בשגגה שהביא אשתו הצדקה במכשול עון מפני פחדו פן יתרגמהו, והיה לו לבטוח כשם שיציל אותו ואת אשתו ואת כל אשר לו כי יש באלהים כח לעזור ולהציל, גם יציאתו מן הארץ שנצטווה עליה מתחילה מפני הרעב עון אשר חטא, כי האלהים ברעב יפדנו ממנו, ועל המעשה הזה נאמר⁴³ כי האלהים ברעב יפדנו פרעה⁴³. במקום המשפט שמה הרשע⁴⁴ החטא.

The Rabbis have explained this subject in Bereshith Rabbah: ⁷⁴ "Rabbi Pinchas said in the name of Rabbi Oshaya that the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Abraham, 'Go forth and tread out a path for your children!' Thus you find that whatever is written concerning Abraham is also written concerning his children. In connection with Abraham it is written, *And there was a famine in the land;* in connection with Israel, it is written *For these two years hath the famine been in the land.*"⁷⁵

Know that Abraham our father unintentionally committed a great sin by bringing his righteous wife to a stumbling-block of sin on account of his fear for his life. He should have trusted that G-d would save him and his wife and all his belongings for G-d surely has the power to help and to save. His leaving the Land, concerning which he had been commanded from the beginning, on account of the famine, was also a sin he committed, for in famine G-d would redeem him from death.⁷⁶ It was because of this deed that the exile in the land of Egypt at the hand of Pharaoh was decreed for his children.⁷⁷ In the place of justice, there is wickedness⁷⁸ and sin.

25 HAKSAV V'HAKABALA וְהַקְבָּלָה

לך לעד וחסד מנוסה, וכן כן בארץ ארומי את חטיה הכנס וכן גורמת אל סגנת עונם גדולה, וטווחם הגדולם היא בעבורך ר"ל ענין הונג צד, כי אף אם תנעלי לאחד מנס לא חטיה תנך כולם ועומאס, כי פנים חטיה כשכר נסתלק מנך איסור חלשות והכי את מותנת להם, שכל אם נפס ייטב לי נעצרך, שנכנתך ייטיב עמלי, ואת חטי פנה להטיני מהם עושר ועמן, חטיה סתמים הגולה על חכמה חכמי ארת ס' אף יכניס חלשות סנדקת עם עבליה חשכני, עם הסופרת לקבל תענות נטיטלו עליהם ויפללוה והיא נעולה צעל וסוף חשכני עלות בני גם, ונמנין אמר חכמת חטא פסאס גדולה זום עד סגור פל בניו גיכוס ל' עלות חנס, ואין נפאס כי ערעה כחתינו סמנו (פסות דרע סגיא) ענין זה נכנל י נטיטת חכמה זו סקדיה חטי חטי וסוף עמד נכולם, ואם היה זו עון חטי חטי אף יספדוהו ל' חלשות, וכן מנה סלמחו נמדדע ע"ס ויכר חלטים את חכמה וישלם את לוט, נטו זכיתו על חכמה על לוט, שחמע לוח סלמח חכמה על חטי חשוחו היא ולא גילה חכמה לפיקר סת סקדיה עליו, חשכר מזה דעמם עלל חטי חכמה זום חלומס, ועוד דגזיקות גיחת חכמה חלומס חכמה חכמה נין

V. 27. ויגדו ווי. Our sages, who never objected to draw attention to the small and great mistakes and weaknesses in the history of our great forefathers, and thereby make them just the more instructive for us (see remarks on Ch. XII, 10), here, too, on ויגדו make a remark which is indeed a "signpost" for all of us. They point out that the striking contrast in the grandchildren of Abraham may have been due, not so much to a difference in their temperaments as to mistakes in the way they were brought up. As long as they were little, no attention was paid to the slumbering differences in their natures (see on V. 24), both had exactly the same teaching and educational treatment, and the great law of education in the same way: "bring up each child in accordance with its own way" was forgotten: — That each child must be treated differently, with an eye to the slumbering tendencies of his nature, and out of them, be educated to develop his special characteristics for the one pure human and Jewish life. The great Jewish task in life is basically simple, one and the same for all, but in its realisation is as complicated and varied as human natures and tendencies are varied, and the manifold varieties of life that result from them.

But just because of that, must each one be brought up "על פי דרכו" according to the presumed path of life to which his tendencies lead, each one differently to the one great goal. To try to bring up a Jacob and an Esau in the same college, make them have the same habits and hobbies, meditative life is the surest way to court disaster. A Jacob will, with ever increasing zeal and zest, imbibe knowledge from the well of wisdom and truth, while an Esau can hardly wait for the time when he can throw the old books, but at the same time, a whole purpose of life, behind his back, a life of which he has only learnt to know from one angle, and in a manner for which he can find no disposition in his whole nature.

Had Isaac and Rebecca studied Esau's nature and character early enough, and asked themselves how can even an Esau, how can all the strength and energy, agility and courage that lies slumbering in this child, be won over to be used in the service of God, and the future not be trained to become, not a ציד בר, but in truth a 'בר לפי ה', then Jacob and Esau, with their totally different natures could still have remained twin-brothers in spirit and life, quite early in life Esau's "sword" and Jacob's "spirit" could have worked hand in hand, and who can say what a different aspect the whole history of the ages might have presented. But, as it was, יגדו תערים, only when the boys had grown into men, one was surprised to see that, out of one and the selfsame womb, having had exactly the same care, training and schooling, two such contrasting persons emerge.

ברוך או יצחק במעשי עשו היטב, הי' מניצ, שהוא עובד ע"ז, ואולי היה מחזיר למוטב, או לכה"פ לא היה אומר למסור לו את הברכות. אח"כ ראה יצחק, שעשו בחר לו ברזקא את הצידי לאמונות; והנה בביתו של יצחק הי' מה לאכול, ועשו הי' צד ציד ואוכל בקינות טעורה, כוללי בשד; לא למסור ולצבור כסף ליום רע, אם כן איז וי "אמונות". וגם זכר כזה צריך היה בדיקה מעולה במעשיו ובפטר שון היתה הסתיה השניה שלו מדרך הישר, אך יצחק לא גער בו גם הפעם, אדרבה נתנה כדרך האבות, מציד בוג, "המרויח כבר כסף בעצמו ועוזר לאביו". והסתיה השלישית, שראה יצחק בעשן, היא שליקח לו נשים מרשעות, והן לא ידעו כמות לרמת את הזקן: "ותהיינה מרת רוח ליצחק", שראה שון מקמרות לע"ז; אבל גם הפעם לא בדיק את ה"תשטיש" שלו, שגאם גם הוא עובר ע"ז כנשיו, ומתי חודד חרדה גדולה? — כאשר שמוע מפיו עשו בעצמו, שמכר את הככורה; אך גם אז לא חלל מלקרוא אותו "בני", ומלברכו ברכה הראיה לו? גם אז לא בדיק אחרי מעשיו בנו ולא תהיל את המעבות, שבנו עשו עושה, עד יום מותו, ומתו תוכחת מנולה לאבות, ורזאים בבגודים את ילמיה השומאה של עשו; ברליחה מחודד, בחירת אמונת בלא רשות זאב, תאות האכליה והמתחרות, ובחרת אשה עוברת על דת, והם האבות מחשים ומלמדים זכות על בניהם, כפי אשר ישים השטן בפיהם, וע"י זה יוצאים הבנים לתרבות רעה, והאבות רזאים אח"כ, שגיהנם פתוחה להם מתחתיהם, ואין לאל ידם להשיע. החרזון י"א ישלת לנו את אליהו הנביא לחשיב לך בנים על אבותם.

(כ) ויגדלו הנערים. כל זמן שהיו קטנים לא היו נכרים במעשיהם... כיון שונעו בני י"ג שנה זה פירש לבתי מדרשות וזה פירש לע"א. רש"י. נאמנים עליו דברי חז"ל, שעשו עשה כל התעבות, אשר שגא הי'; אבל נפלא הברך, שלא נאמר מה מפורש בחזרה: רק מה שמכר את הככורה ורצה לחרוג את יעקב, כשליקח את ברכתו, אבל רק רצה, ומדוע כסתה החזרה על מעשיו המכוערים? ונראה, שבוה למדה חזרה וזכות על יצחק, שאהב את בנו הרשע ורצה למסור לו את הברכות; והיינו — מפני שלא ידע המעשיו הרעים של עשו יותר ממה שגאמר מפורש בחזרה. ומדוע? — מפני שלא השגיח אחרי ולא בדיק כדבעי, מה מעשיו. ומה אפשר ללמוד את דרכי החינוך, שעל זאב לזכור חמיר, שהבן השוכב דרכו להסתיר את מעשיו, ועליו להשגיח על בנו בשבע עינים, והעיקר להרגיש, אפילו את הסתיות הקלות של בנו מדרך הישר, ולהשתלח תיכף להחזירו למוטב; כי כל החזרה קלה של זאב ואי-תגובה על סתית הבן מני דרך, תביא סתיה חדשה יותר קשה, כי כך הוא דרכו של היצר; היים אומר לו עשה כך ומתו... עד שאומר לו לך עכוד ע"י, והאב הוא האשם בה; והלא תראה; יעקב ועשו למדים בבהמ"ד עד י"ג שנה, אח"כ חלד עשו ועבד בסתל ע"י, ואביו לא הרגיש, ומה הרגיש? עשו איננו רוצה יותר ללמד, ולמל עליו זכות ואמר, כדרך האבות, הלא לא הכל יהיו רכבים... ואם הוא בחר לו אומנות לצד ציד איז רע... אבל את שהאב מחזיב ללמד את בנו אמונות, ותיי חוכמו של זאב, ואם הבן בעצמו בועט בחר ובלימדו, ושת אל המלאכה פניו.