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תשפ"ו RAV BRAZIL PARSHAS VAYEIRA

AVRAHAM'S HACHNASAS ORCHIM AND MATAN TORAH

The Medrash (Shmos Rabba 28,1) states that in the merit of Avraham *Avinu* the Torah was given to Moshe *Rabbeinu* to transmit to *Am Yisrael*. When Moshe ascended Sinai to receive the Torah he was immediately attacked by the angels who complained that Man does not deserve the Torah but rather it should be given to them. It was then that Hashem transformed the countenance of Moshe to appear as Avraham *Avinu*. Hashem began reprimanding these angels by saying aren't you embarrassed in front of him to say these degrading words. Did you not eat and weren't you fed by him in his dwelling?

We must attempt to understand why merely being hosted with a hospitable meal by Avraham *Avinu* would be sufficient merit to withhold giving the Torah to the *malachim* and instead to give it to Avraham's descendants.

בקשו מלאכי השרת לפגוע במשה עשה בו הקב"ה קלסטירין של פניו של משה דומה לאברהם אמר להם הקב"ה אי אתם מתביישים הימנו לא זהו שירדתם אצלו ואכלתם בתוך ביתו אמר הקב"ה למשה לא נתנה לך תורה אלא בזכות אברהם שנאמר לקחת מתנות באדם ואין אדם האמור כאן אלא אברהם שנאמר (יהושע יד) האדם הגדול בענקים הוי ומשה עלה אל האלהים.

Another *segment* of this dialogue between Moshe and the *malachim* is found in the Yalkut Shmoni Bamidbar 16

אמר לפניו רבש"ע תורה שאתה נותן לי מה כתיב בה [אנכי ה' אלהיך אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים, אמר להם כלום למצרים ירדתם לפרעה השתעבדתם תורה למה תהא לכם

Moshe *Rabbeinu* asked Hashem what is written in Your Torah and Hashem responded the first of the *Aseres Hadibros* מצרים אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים. Moshe then addressed the angels with the following question "what experience did you have with going down to *Mitzrayim* that you want the Torah?

This rebuke as well we must try to understand. The *malachim* who are so spiritual did not desire a monopoly on the physical Torah with its concrete letters and sentences, together with its physical *mitzvos*. To this part of the Torah they were not at all interested for they understood that they could not relate to it at all. Rather, the spiritual and esoteric part of the Torah, its deeper meanings, secrets, splendor, *deveikus*, etc is what they were seeking. Just as they being angels have no relationship to the physical part of the Torah, so too they thought that *Am Yisrael* has no connection to the spiritual part of the Torah. Man is composed of body and flesh and struggles daily with his *yetzer harah* and

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sometimes he fails and is unsuccessful. This fallibility makes the deep spiritual part of the Torah alien and removed from them. If so, why then did Moshe tell them that since they never descended to *Mitzrayim* which is the experience of the body, they therefore have no merit to possess the Torah.

The answer to both of these queries is to clearly understand the fundamental of Man's unlimited potential of Man that by actualizing his *bechirah* to the fullest he can attain levels that are even higher than a *malach* only because he alone possesses a *neshamah*. Let us analyze Avraham's encounter with the three *malachim* who came to visit him on the third day after the *Bris Milah* which he performed on himself at the age of ninety nine.

וישא עיניו וירא והנה שלשה אנשים נצבים עליו וירא וירץ לקראתם (Bereishis 18,2)

Avraham lifts his eyes and he sees three people standing **upon** him and he runs towards them from the opening of the tent and he bows before them. Although Avraham is experiencing excruciating pain after his surgery, he nevertheless girds strength to run from the opening of his tent to invite these strangers into his abode. At first these angels appeared standing "above him". After all they were angels who are spiritual entities dwelling in heaven. They have "freshly" descended upon earth to fulfill their mission from Hashem, and the heavenly impression still resides amongst themselves.

However, as we watch closely to the further development of the story, we will find that the position status of Avraham and the *malachim* begin to change. As Avraham gets involved with the mitzvah of *chesed* and *Hachnasas Orchim*, we find that **וירץ לקראתם**, he runs towards them as if the *malachim* and him are on the same level not as before. As the kindness of Avraham is revealed even more through his preparation of the meal for his guests, things change even more. As he serves the delicacies before his guests while they recline under the shade of his oasis, the *passuk* portrays how the positions of the two shift even more

והוא עומד עליהם תחת העץ ויאכלו He is standing **on them** under the tree and they ate.

In this singular story of *chesed* we see what the exposure potential of a human being named Avraham that when occupied with heart and soul fulfilling a mitzvah, can attain levels of spirituality greater than three *malachim* together. This revelation answers the question why the Torah decided to write and portray this particular episode of Avraham's *chesed of Hachnasas Orchim* more than any other ones that occurred in the last fifty years of his *Chesed* and *Kiruv* career. This specific event is brought to us in order to realize that man although flesh and blood has a *neshamah* that can raise him way beyond a *malach* whose life is spiritually holy only because he was **created to be** so and not because he **chose** so.

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The *passuk* in Shir Hashirim 7,2 says מה יפו פעמיך בנעלים בת נדיב How beautiful are your steps in shoes the daughter of Avraham Avinu. We suggest that this is referring to the episode of *chesed* Avraham toiled for the *malachim*. The *sefarim* tell us that the shoe is called נעל a lock for it refers to the body which locks in the *neschama* like a shoe locks in the foot. Normally the *neschama* is not seen even though it can be felt. However, sometimes when one is fully occupied with a mitzvah both with body and soul, an expression and light of the *neschama* is manifested and the soul becomes unlocked to an extent. This is what happened with Avraham and his *chesed* to the *malachim*. First came the נצבים they were above him. However, when Avraham began running to do the mitzvah he reached their level לקראתם. When he continued in his fervor to complete the mitzvah with all its trimmings הוא עמד עליהם he even surpassed their *madraigah* each level adding another plateau and composing the word נעל to unlock the manifestation of one's *neschama*.

The journey of Avraham's episode of הנסות אורחים is hinted in the *passuk* מה יפו פעמיך בנעלים בת נדיב. The words אברהם אבינו is *gematriah* of יפו פעמיך עה"כ. Daughter of Avraham how beautiful are your steps when you follow those same steps of Avraham your Alter Zaidah who took his flesh and blood and elevated it higher than a *malach* status of *deveikus* with Hashem.

Let us analyze now the prepared meal of Avraham Avinu on behalf of his three guests. How did these *malachim* eat physical food? Rashi learns that they only gave the appearance to be eating but they did not actually do so. In contrast the דעת זקנים מבעלי תוס' brings a *Medrash* that the *malachim* actually ate. According to their opinion one must say that the physical food that Avraham and Sarah made for them was really spiritual with a physical appearance equal to the מן that the *Yidden* ate in the desert which is called לחם אבירים food of the angels. If we Yisrael can consume food of the angels which is spiritual, then as angels we can also make their type of food as well to eat.

But it goes even further. Two of these *malachim* were punished because they said משיחיתים אנחנו we are destroying Sodom instead of giving the entire credit to Hashem. For one hundred thirty five years they were banished from heaven only to return during Yaakov's dream of the ladder reaching the heavens with *malachim* ascending heavenwards referring to these two. (Breishis 19,22 Rashi, Daas Zekainim 28,12). We see from this that even *malachim* from heaven can become blemished by being on earth for a short time even while fulfilling the very mission directed from Hashem.

Now we can return to the two *Medrashim* and understand what really transpired. When Moshe ascended Sinai to receive the Torah the *malachim* said only we heavenly creatures rightfully deserve the spiritual part of the Torah with all its secrets. Hashem made Moshe's appearance look like Avraham and said "Aren't you embarrassed from this statement. You were the recipients of Avraham's *Haschnasas Orchim* whereupon he demonstrated that he attained levels even higher than yours. How did you eat his food if it wasn't malach food? The answer that it was malach food made from human malachim who chose to be a מרכבה לשכינה during their lifetime מה יפו פעמיך בנעלים.

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Not only you ate his food, but immediately after leaving his presence you sinned against Hashem by being haughty concerning your mission while Avraham was עפר ואפר אנכי throughout his lifetime. Who is greater?

Then Moshe tells the *malachim* that they shouldn't think that this possibility of surpassing *malachim* is only for a very small selected portion of individuals out of *Klal Yisrael*. This assumption is false. He asks the *malachim* did you go down to *Mitzrayim* to take part in **Makos Bechoros**? The *Baal Haggadah* writes שרף אני ולא מלאך אני ולא אחר that *Makas Bechoros* was executed only through Hashem as the *Ari Hakadosh* writes that the *tumah* in *Mitzrayim* was so extreme that even a *malach* who would have entered *Mitzrayim* would have become blemished. In contrast *Am Yisrael* were in *Mitzrayim* as broken slaves both physically, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually, and yet when they left *Mitzrayim*, within merely fifty days they already attained the level of *Adam Harishon* before the *chait* of *Aitz Hadaas* in Gan Eden.

Avraham *Avinu* gave to every one of his descendants the ability to rise above his body and to sanctify his life by unlocking his *neshamah*. In fact every Shabbos we have the capability to go through this same journey of Avraham as his בן נדיב. When we return from Shul we are accompanied with *malachim* and we address them when entering the dining room where the *seudah* takes place with the welcome of מלאכי השרת שלום עליכם מלאכי השרת Peace to you the lofty angels who serve (Hashem). We look up to them with awe and intimidation as holy untouchables since they are so close to Hashem and actually serve Him. However, as we experience the *neshamah yesairah* becoming unlocked within us, and we attach ourselves to the Shabbos in a deeper and meaningful way, all of a sudden these *malachim* are not so distant from us anymore. They lose some of our awe since we ourselves have now become somewhat more elevated than before. No longer are they called by us מלאכי השרת but rather מלאכי השלום. They seem now to have come to make peace with us and not to fill us with fear by flaunting their outstanding holiness. This change is because we too are experiencing an elevated holiness with our *neshamos* now being unlocked.

Our transition doesn't stop here for we say ברכוני לשלום we are now holy enough to approach them and ask them for even a *beracha* because both you and the *malachim* know that you are worthy for such a blessing as we all can sense clearly the glow of your *neshamah*. Our meeting soon reaches a pinnacle when we start to realize that the ones who **now** feel uncomfortable in our presence are the *malachim* who feel our intense holiness being unlocked. We therefore give them permission to leave when their presence with us becomes unbearable שלום מלאכי השלום.

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