

# Kehillah #44



## THE PERTINENT PARASHA

### Avraham the Courageous

Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer | Rav of Kehillat Ohr Chadash, Ramot, Jerusalem

At the end of the *akeida*, the angel of Hashem emphasizes Avraham Avinu's attribute of *yirah*: "Do not stretch out your hand against the boy nor do anything to him for now I know that you are a G-d-fearing man, since you have not withheld your son, your only one, from Me" (Bereishis 22:12).

This seems difficult. Avraham Avinu represents love: "Avraham who loves me" (Yeshayahu 41:8). His core attribute, moreover, is *chesed*, kindness (Michah 7:20). Why, at the pinnacle of Avraham's achievement, do we find an emphasis on *yirah*?

The answer emerges from the way Chazal describe the *akeida*.

At the end of each *selichos* session, we mention a shortlist of prominent figures whose prayers for salvation were answered, the first on the list being Avraham Avinu on Mount Moriah. But what did Avraham pray for? What do we mean when we say, "He Who answered Avraham Avinu on Mount Moriah, He will answer us"?

The answer, of course, is that

Avraham prayed that his son should be saved. He was prepared to offer up his son, but as he went, he prayed that Yitzchak should be saved. He trusted that somehow, Hashem would answer his prayers. We sometimes miss this fundamental point. Avraham Avinu did not wish to sacrifice his beloved son. He heeded the word of Hashem, but he was forever hopeful for a reprieve.

**Ramchal writes that the essence of *yirah* is hope—hope directed at Hashem, upon Whom all things depend.**

This goes a long way to resolve the ethical dilemma that many raise concerning Avraham's readiness to sacrifice his son, in contrast with his moral indignation at the Divine plan to destroy Sedom. Avraham was,





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indeed, ready. Yet, at the depth of his heart, he trusted Hashem that it would not happen.

*Ahava* and *yirah* are two sides of one coin. The coin of trust.

*Yirah*, at least in this context, does not mean simple fear. The Ramchal, in fact, writes that the essence of *yirah* is *hope* – hope directed at Hashem, upon Whom all things depend. Avraham Avinu did not withhold his son from Hashem because of the magnitude of his hope, the totality of his trust. This drew, in turn, from the depth of his relationship with Hashem. From his love.

**Avraham Avinu was courageous because of his trust in Hashem, combined with his knowledge of Hashem's way – a way of *tzedakah* and *mishpat*.**

Love inspires us to *chesed*, kindness. *Yirah* inspires us to courage. If there's one thing the Torah implies about Avraham Avinu, it was his courage. Avraham was ready to follow Hashem, though he did not know where. He was ready to fight

a perilous war to save his nephew, and to argue with Hashem about the destruction of Sedom. And he was ready, if we add the Midrash, to be thrown into a furnace for his core faith in Hashem. He was even ready to sacrifice his son.

Avraham Avinu was courageous because of his trust in Hashem, combined with his knowledge of Hashem's way – a way of *tzedakah* and *mishpat* (*Bereishis* 18:19). He knew the good and the just, and he knew that Hashem was on his side. His complete trust made him infinitely courageous.

The call of the moment, the call of war, is courage. As the pasuk writes, at war we must not fear: "When you go out to battle against your enemy [...] you shall not fear them." And from where do we take courage? The Torah continues: "For Hashem, your G-d, is with you."

At the gates of war, the Kohen tells the warriors, "Let your heart not be faint." And why? "For Hashem, your G-d, is the One who goes with you, to fight for you with your enemies, to save you."

In times of war, we all need to be courageous, soldiers and civilians alike. To follow the path of Avraham Avinu. For Hashem is with us.



# Hashkafically Speaking

## Man of the World

Rabbi Yaacov Haber – Rav of Kehillas Shivtei Yeshurun, Ramat Beit Shemesh

So much happened in the life of Avraham that is not recorded in the Torah. The Midrashim are full of information about Avraham Avinu's life. When the Torah begins to tell us about Avraham he is already seventy-five. Avraham already lived a full life and holy life. Yet, at the stage in life when most people envisage taking things easier after full and active years, the story of Avraham Avinu begins.

I'm reminded of when Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, *zatzal*, retired as *rosh yeshiva* of Torah Vodaath after an illustrious career, and probably at an age similar to that of Avraham Avinu, remarked that finally now, he would have the opportunity to become a great Torah leader.

It is only now, at the age of seventy-five, that Hashem starts Avraham on a new journey both physically and spiritually, to be recorded for his children eternally.

### **Which Trait Defines Avraham, Emes or Chesed?**

What has happened until now? Most famously Avraham smashed all the idols in his father's shop. He was the original, and literal,

iconoclast. He was thrown into Nimrod's furnace after refusing to recant his beliefs and miraculously survived to tell the tale. He fought against Nimrod as a king in his own right, militarily taking up the side of good and God.

Avraham was, above all, an *ish emes*, a man of truth. Truth was his driving force, and truth gave him a fiery edge which would put him at odds with the world and bring him to conflict. Yet that is in marked contrast to the labeling of Avraham as the epitome of *chesed*, kindness, which is how he is primarily known to us. So, which was his defining characteristic – *emes* or *chesed*?

The Talmud (*Taanis* 4) teaches us that if we see a *tzurba mirabbanan*, or what we would call today a *yeshiva bachur*, behaving in an angry, fiery fashion, we should not judge him harshly. We should realize that it is not he that is angry; rather, "it is his Torah burning inside of him." Rashi understands the term *tzurba mirabbanan* to refer to a young, sharp but not yet developed *talmid chacham*, in contrast to *hahu mirabbanan*, a mature scholar.





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In other words, at the beginning of a Torah scholar's development in Torah it is to be expected that the inherent fire of the *Toras emes* which he is absorbing with such intensity will cause him to be fiery

**Avraham was, above all, a man of *emes*, truth, yet that is in marked contrast to his being the epitome of *chesed*, kindness.**

and even angry. However, says the Talmud, as he matures he learns to integrate his learning with his personality as he develops the necessary self-control to be able to relate to others without excessive ardor.

I've been fortunate to have had personal contact with a number of *gedolei Yisrael* of the previous generation — Rav Scheinberg, Rav Moshe Feinstein, Rav Shach, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, the Satmar Rebbe, and more. Their most obvious common feature was a genuine personal warmth. I remember being scared before

speaking to Rav Eliezer Shach, *zatzal*, only to learn that he was the warmest of them all, holding my hand throughout the conversation. Mature *talmidei chachamim* transform from a place of ardor to a place of *chesed*, kindness and peace.

### **Avraham's Descent to Egypt: The Cause of a Significant Shift in Perspective**

Let's look at Avraham's first descent to Egypt when he was seventy-five. As they see the road signs to Egypt he tells his wife Sarah, "Now I know that you are a beautiful woman." At seventy-five he suddenly realized that Sarah is beautiful? During all their years of marriage he never realized that his wife was the most beautiful woman in the world.

Clearly something had changed for Avraham Avinu. He has now joined the world and is now relating to the world around him differently. Until now he was a man of pure, unadulterated truth. Such a perspective is one which can't fully relate to the physical world in which we find ourselves, with all its faults and imperfections. Pure truth is in the realm of the mind alone, disconnected from the world at large.

One who lives in this realm will





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clash with the falsehood that is inevitably encountered. "Beauty is vain!" However the Torah indicates that at the point of entry to the most materialistic place on earth, Avraham descends from his lofty level, where earthly beauty is entirely irrelevant, to relate to the physicality around him more directly. It is only now, at the age of seventy-five, that he can bring down his connection to supernal truth to a physical realm, thus elevating it. It is now, as he arrives in Egypt, that he enters the real world.

It is here that we meet Avraham. The Torah begins to record his life as a paragon for all future generations. As he is transforming from an otherworldly man of truth to the man of kindness, he becomes primarily defined by his outpouring of *chesed* in the physical world at large. He becomes a man of the world.

### **Blending the Physical with the Spiritual**

This transformation is to become the primary purpose in the life of his descendants: the ability to integrate supernal ideas and ideals within an imperfect physical world in order to elevate physicality itself and make the world Godly.

The Leshem notes that the

numerical value of the Hebrew term for "beauty" added to the numerical value of the Hebrew word for "truth" equals the numerical value of the Hebrew word "Yisrael." "Beauty is vain"; it is worthless and empty in most contexts. However, the Jewish people have the unique capacity to transmute beauty into

**This ability to integrate supernal ideals within an imperfect world is to become the primary purpose of Avraham's descendants.**

the realm of truth. If we further add the numerical value of *chesed*, we arrive at 613, the number of mitzvos in the Torah.

Our spirituality must be very practical and down-to-earth. We have mitzvos involving every detailed aspect of physical life that force us to be part of the world and its betterment. Together we travel on Avraham's journey through life. We pass through the physical world as we make the spiritual contributions that we are so capable of making.



### A Peaceful Way to Disagree

Rabbi Asher Meir | Torah and Policy Researcher

Two important narratives in our *parasha* deal with Avimelech, king of Gerar. (Scholars think that Gerar was near today's Netivot and Ofakim. *Tiferes Yisrael, Shekalim* 5:1, explains that in fact every king of Gerar is called Avimelech, just as every king of Egypt is called Pharaoh.) In the first narrative (chapter 20), Avimelech commands that Sarah be brought to his palace, evidently to be taken as a wife; in the second (*Bereshis* 21:22), he makes a covenant between his dynasty and that of Avraham.

It is easy to see Avimelech as a tiresome figure. When Hashem Himself informs Avimelech that he is worthy of death for his actions, he immediately launches a counterattack, pleading both his own innocence and Hashem's unfairness. Avimelech then attacks Avraham for hiding Sarah's married status, to which Avraham mounts his own defense. When Avraham complains that Avimelech's servants stole a well, Avimelech launches a litany: he doesn't know who is responsible, Avraham never bothered to inform him, and furthermore, he never even heard of the incident.

However, *Chazal* actually view Avimelech's wrangling in a positive

light. The Midrash (*Bereshis Rabba* 21:25) states: "Avraham reproved Avimelech: Rebbe Yosi bar Chanina said, Reproof leads to love, as it is written (*Mishlei* 9), 'Reprove a wise man and he will love you.'" Rebbe Yosi bar Chanina goes even further, asserting that love is impossible without reproof. Reish Lakish adds that reproof leads to peace.

When claims and counterclaims are substantive and made in a way which is assertive but not combative, they lead to understanding, peace, and ultimately love. When Avimelech attacks Avraham, Avraham acknowledges that his conduct requires explanation. As a result, Avimelech and Avraham part as friends: Avimelech takes responsibility, voluntarily gives Avraham recompense, and welcomes him to remain. Avraham in turn willingly prays on behalf of Avimelech's household. When Avimelech later offers him a treaty, Avraham readily agrees.

Compare this to the seemingly similar story with Pharaoh (*Bereshis* 12:14-20). There, Hashem does not even bother to talk to Pharaoh; presumably He was aware that Pharaoh was not amenable to reasoning. Pharaoh in turn accuses Avram, and does not bother to





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wait for an explanation. Their subsequent parting is acrimonious, as Pharaoh commands, "Take your wife and go!"

**It is rare that this approach to disputes fails to yield an agreed outcome, without the need for turning to a beis din.**

The Rambam explains at length that giving reproof is a mitzvah, but it has to be given in a gentle and non-threatening way (*Hilchos De'os* 6:7-8). One reason is that the other person will be willing to listen to your claims, but I believe that an equally important reason is that this approach projects that you are willing to listen to his.

This principle applies quite broadly to disputes. Whenever anybody asks my advice in a monetary dispute, I invariably give the same advice: Carefully prepare a thorough and accurate written description of the facts as you see them, and of what you are due as you see it. Emphasize that you are giving your point of view, and proactively invite the other side to correct any facts

or conclusions they disagree with. After you are done, review the text and ruthlessly eliminate any term that sounds in any way judgmental. After you send it, be truly willing to listen to the other side and adjust your own point of view.

This approach is a carrot and stick to the other side: It shows you are determined, but also fair. I have given this advice innumerable times, and it is rare that it fails to yield an agreed outcome, without the need for turning to a *beis din*. (I must add that none of these cases involves huge claims.)

Immediately after the encounter with Avimelech, the Torah tells us that Yitzchak is conceived. (As Rashi explains, this was a consequence of Avraham's prayer on behalf of Avimelech.) Yitzchak is born and weaned, and then Avraham makes a "great feast." (*Bereshis* 21:8.) Chazal (*Bava Metzia* 87a) understand this as "a feast of the great": Avraham invited "*gedolei hador*" (the great figures of the generation). Rashi (following *Tanchuma, Vayishlach* 23) names Shem, Ever, and Avimelech. The first two are identified elsewhere by Rashi as great *roshei yeshiva* (*Bereshis* 25:22, 27, 28:11, 37:3). Why does the comparatively unlearned Avimelech merit the same title as these Torah giants? Perhaps it is because he consistently displayed a willingness to learn.



## Taking Interest

### *Heter Iska* – A Complex Document

Rabbi Shloimy Muller

Talmid of Rav Pinchas Vind *shlita*, founder of the Beis Horaah L'Inyanei Ribbis

*Baruch Hashem*, we have covered the gist of the *heter iska*. We've learned that the money borrowed is an investment, and the borrower pays dividends, not interest. There must be an investment of sorts on the borrower's end, and the returns should be a reflection of possible revenue. We also know that theoretically the borrower can avoid paying the returns if he can prove a lack of profit.

The *heter iska* is employed to prevent the *issur* of *ribbis*. It's important to recognize the severity of the *issur* that is being resolved by making the loan into an *iska*.

There is a difference between borrowing from the bank and depositing (i.e., lending) to the bank. Regarding lending to the bank, since the bank is a limited liability company and therefore only the bank's assets are owed to the lender (without a personal responsibility), Rav Moshe Feinstein, *zatzal*, held that there is no problem of *ribbis*, and therefore there is no need for a *heter iska* at all. This position was not accepted by most of the *poskim* in Eretz Yisrael; however, many of them agree that this causes the *ribbis* to be only *mideRabbanan*. This

applies to most interest-earning accounts in banks.

(If the bank does not guarantee the returns but rather it offers to invest your money for you in a third-party company, the bank is not the borrower, but is rather an agent, and it's necessary to have a *heter iska* from the company receiving the money.)

This above is true when lending to the bank. However, borrowing from the bank involves *ribbis* that is *assur min haTorah*.

As we can see, the *heter iska* is a complex legal document, and not all of them are created equal. Although virtually all of the *heter iskas* employed by the banks are acceptable, the standards vary, and it's worthwhile investigating the standard of a particular bank and letting that be a factor in deciding from which bank to borrow or lend.

The same way we are careful with the *hechsherim* we eat and we don't assume every *hechsher* is perfect, although there may be no outright Torah prohibitions involved, we should most certainly be careful with the *heter iska* we are using to avoid many *issurim min haTorah*.





# Acheinu Kol Beis Yisrael

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## PARASHA AND PARNASSAH

### The Secret to Resilience

Rabbi Tzvi Broker – Career Coach and Director of Pilzno Work Inspired

One of the most treasured soft skills in today's workplace is resilience. Wrong strategies, unexpected changes, or missed deadlines are expected to happen. The question is if your response to setbacks is a heavy, failure-focused mindset or an upbeat, resilient, growth-oriented mindset.

Rav Tzadok HaKohen (*Divrei Sofrim 15*) reveals the secret to a Jew's inherent resilience in explaining the birth of Yitzchak in this week's *parasha*. He asks why Hashem didn't give Avraham and Sarah a child within the normal age of having children. Surely Hashem could have arranged this, as we know Hashem intended for Avraham to build His chosen people.

During this time there were certainly many years of seemingly unanswered prayers, efforts that were not fruitful, and painful feelings of trying and not being successful (see the *Kedushas Levi*).

Yet Rav Tzadok explains that Hashem intentionally designed it this way in order to embed supernatural resilience within the Jewish people.

In Rav Tzadok's words:

*The whole creation of the Jewish people took place after the normal*

*state of despair, as Avraham and Sarah were already elderly and beyond the natural means of having children, and it was inconceivable that such a thing would take place. But in truth, this was specifically arranged by Hashem so that the whole creation of the Jewish people would be in a way that is after despair, because no one would have believed that Sarah could still have a child. This is the essence of being Jewish – to believe that there is no despair ever, since nothing is beyond Hashem's capability, and through Hashem's help one can be successful.*

In your own life when facing obstacles in your career development, rough financial patches, or bottlenecks in your job or business it can be challenging to keep an upbeat and positive attitude. The message of the birth of Yitzchak is that you inherently have the ability to access resilience in every situation. To be Jewish is to realize that each missed target is part of the process of building. There is no failure. Each step is feedback from which you can grow and learn. While experiencing hurdles at work or in your finances may be inevitable, become empowered with the inherent resilience inside of you. With Hashem's help you will ultimately be successful.



### Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac HaLevi Herzog

Rabbi Dov Loketch – Rabbi of Agudas Yisrael Mogen Avraham, Detroit

*Last week we described Rav Herzog's appointment as Ashkenazic chief rabbi of what was then Palestine. This week we'll recount some events that took place in the early years that he served in this role.*

In one of his first addresses after his appointment, Rav Herzog articulated a bold vision for the role of the chief rabbi, based upon the Torah's command that the Jewish king write two *sifrei Torah* – one which he kept in his treasury, and a second which he brought with him wherever he went.

Rav Herzog explained that these two *sifrei Torah* signify the king's dual responsibility – to care for the nation's internal spiritual well-being, and to represent Am Yisrael in the public sphere. In assuming the position of chief rabbi, he said, he was committing himself to both these crucial tasks. He pledged to work tirelessly to enhance Torah observance within Am Yisrael, but also to proudly serve as our nation's ambassador and advocate on the world stage.

#### **A Tireless Leader in a Time of Unrest**

Throughout his impressive twenty-two-year tenure as chief rabbi, this

is precisely what Rav Herzog did.

Just half a year after assuming his position, the Peel Commission, which the British government established to investigate the deadly Arab riots of 1936, published its recommendation to partition Palestine into three areas – a Jewish state, an Arab state, and a third region which would remain under British control. Rav Herzog vehemently objected, and the Chief Rabbinate issued a statement expressing its opposition to partitioning Eretz Yisrael. He sent a letter to Sir Arthur Wauchope and Colonel Secretary William Ormsby-Gore which read as follows:

*The Chief Rabbinate is shocked and dismayed at the recommendation to partition the Land, which undermines the divine promises regarding the border of the holy land to the People of Israel made by G-d, Ruler of the World through His holy prophets. Furthermore, the suggested boundaries of the Jewish state are so narrow that they are*





## BIOGRAPHY & LEGACY



*unsustainable and cannot possibly provide a refuge for the multitude of refugees in the Diaspora who have no place to rest their weary feet from their wanderings. . . . This suggestion deals a critical and devastating blow to world Jewry in its entirety, who since being exiled from their land have sworn on oath: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill."*

Ultimately, however, the Zionist establishment as well as Rav Herzog reluctantly agreed to the principle of partition, recognizing the sober realities that made it impossible at that time for the Jews to be given sovereignty over all of Eretz Yisrael. This set the stage for what would become the famous United Nations vote in 1947 to establish a Jewish state alongside an Arab state in Palestine.

Another delicate issue which Rav Herzog needed to address was the violence perpetrated by a number of Jewish extremist groups, such as the Irgun and the Stern Gang, against innocent Arabs in retaliation for Arab terrorism against Jews. Rav Herzog firmly opposed such activities, both on principle and as being counterproductive to the Zionist cause. In a symposium held in the summer of 1938 to discuss and debate the proper response to increasing Arab violence, Rav

Herzog spoke and remarked that if he were to be assassinated, he would not want Jews to commit acts of violence in revenge. He explained:

*G-d forbid that we learn the evil ways of the Gentiles. . . . We have sanctified G-d's name in the eyes of all the Gentiles. We have been a light to the nations of the world. . . . And here in the Land of Israel the Yishuv has shown its greatness of spirit, and this is indeed an achievement. This does not mean that just because we refrain from killing innocent Arabs that we must be silent. Restraint is not silence. "The voice is the voice of Jacob, and the arms the arms of Esau." Arms—arms for protection, to protect ourselves, to protect our lives, to fight for our homeland.*

*To shout out loudly to the entire world. To enlist public opinion in England. . . . What we need most during this difficult moment is unity. . . . This is how Israel should conduct itself in these critical moments as one heart. . . . Heaven forbid that anyone even contemplate an act of terror; an act of violent retribution without trial. . . . This is our greatness, our glory, guarding ourselves from such cruel abominations. Even during difficult and bitter hours we turn to heaven and reserve judgment to the Judge of all the land, for only He metes out retribution.*



## Reframing Emunah

Rebbetzin Ilana Cowland

Relationships Coach and author of *The Moderately Anxious Everybody*

Have emunah. Everything is going to be okay. We will win.

There is so much wrong with this sentiment. I'm not an *apikores*, don't worry. I agree with every sentence. I believe in having emunah. I believe it's going to be okay. And I believe we will have a great win. So what's wrong with it? Where are we erring if that's the reassurance we provide for our anxious self or our anxious families?

Let's start at the end. We will win. Which we? Israel? The IDF? The good guys? *Derech hateva*, that's true. But we're not experiencing *teva*. It's not *teva* that we won the Six-Day War, and the easy infiltration of our enemies four weeks ago wasn't *teva* either. If this thing we're living through hasn't taught us to stop taking Hashem's protection for granted, then what has it taught us?

We will win. Yes. But not because we're strong and well equipped. But rather because we will once again merit the *siyata d'shmaya* that we have become complacent about having. There's work to be done. The soldiers are doing their part,

Hashem should protect them all, and we have to do our part. Hashem will help us because we will earn it once again, and then we will have no one to fear.

**We have to stop associating "having emunah" with "Everything is going to be okay."**

And as part of that work, we have to stop associating "having emunah" with "Everything is going to be okay."

It's a huge insensitivity to people who have endured loss, and it's based on a faulty assumption. Why does every published emunah story have to have a happy ending? A miraculous recovery, or a perfect wedding or somebody else's plane crashing — but at least you missed your flight?

So when things end badly or painfully for other people, it's because they didn't have emunah? Hashem forgot them?





It's a wonderful thing to have a deep belief that the Jewish people's story will end well. It will. Of course. That's Moshiach. But we don't get there by sitting under a rock waiting for it to happen.

We must be very wary of associating our *emunah* with blissful outcomes, or even outcomes at all.

**Let go of control and hold on to Hashem. Hashem is with us now, regardless of the outcomes.**

*Emunah* doesn't mean that one day soon, this and this outcome will happen. *Emunah* means Hashem is with me now, and I am accessing that. *Emunah* doesn't mean that life will never make me cry. Or worse, if someone else is crying but not me, everything is okay. Our people is in so much pain. So many bad outcomes have already happened. How do we grow as a people if we're not crying for each other? ממה שלומך?

The answer? שלומי בשלום עמי!

And while we cry, we feel Hashem crying with us. We feel Hashem right now, with us, in this moment. We're not waiting for Hashem to pull us through for us to have *emunah*. *Emunah* is not about the future outcome but about a current reality.

IY"H, things will be okay. But that can't be the condition for our *emunah*. Let go of control and hold on to Hashem. Hashem is with us now, regardless of the outcomes. Hashem loves and is with me. Right here, right now. That's what we need to internalize. We need to refocus on Hashem in our lives, now. Ignoring Him got us nowhere.

May we merit being attentive to Hashem so that we can merit His attention to us. May we move away from focusing on the future and bring our *emunah* into the present.

I'm not asking for Hashem to bring Moshiach. That's a future prayer. I've changed my phraseology.

May Hashem reveal Moshiach. And may we all step up to whatever we need to do, each according to their own circumstances and capabilities so that it can happen now.



### The Mitzvah of Bikur Cholim

Josh and Tammy Kruger

#### The Story

Another day at school had finished. Sara met her older sister Mia in their usual spot in the schoolyard. Their Uncle Mendy had just undergone knee surgery that afternoon, and the girls had made plans to visit him.

"Ready for our trip?" asked Sara.

"Actually," hesitated Mia, "I don't think it makes sense to go today. I just called the hospital, and the nurse said that Uncle Mendy just fell asleep."

"But I want to do the mitzvah of *bikur cholim*," protested Sara.

"I do, too," replied Mia. "But what good is the visit if Uncle Mendy is sleeping? It's two extra bus rides to travel to the hospital, and he won't even know that we were there. Let's go tomorrow."

"Maybe you're right," said Sara

#### Discussion

**Q:** What connection does our story have with the *parasha*?

**A:** This week's *parasha* begins with the mitzvah of *bikur cholim*. We learn this mitzvah directly from Hashem, who performs *bikur cholim* for Avraham as he recovers from his *bris mila* (Rashi on *Bereshis* 18:1).

**Q:** What should the girls do?

**A:** Even if their uncle is sleeping, the mitzvah of *bikur cholim* still applies. A lot of people think that the term *bikur cholim* means "to visit the sick." Rav Yitzchak Hutner explains that the word *bikur* means to check on the sick person to see how he can be helped (*Iggros and Kesavim* No. 36). In Israeli hospitals, the part of the day when the doctors go room to room to check on patients is called the *bikur*. Even if a person is sleeping, we can still check on him. The *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* writes that this is the critical part





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of the mitzvah (193:3).

Davening is also essential to *bikur cholim* (*Chochmas Adam* 151:3). Being with the sick person helps us daven with more *kavana*. Sara and Mia can daven for their uncle anywhere, but davening in



his room is very special because the *shechina* is present at the bedside of sick people (*Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 193:4). These *tefillos* receive special attention from Hashem.

### Back to Our Story

The girls arrived at the hospital and found their Uncle Mendy sleeping comfortably in his room. They took their *siddurim* out of their school bags and quietly recited *Tehillim*. Later, as Mia scanned the room, she noted her uncle's toothbrush on the floor. "It's really dirty! There's a pharmacy next door. Let's buy Uncle Mendy a new toothbrush."

The next morning Uncle Mendy awoke and was surprised to see a shiny pink toothbrush next to his bed along with a note from Sara and Mia wishing him a *refua sheleima*.

*Written in collaboration with Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer, le'iluy nishmas Frumit bat Yosef.*

