



Moor Lane More Torah

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Output Equals Input

By R' Shmuel Oppenheimer

Avraham sends his servant Eliezer to find a wife for his son Yitzchak. Eliezer prays at the well, and sees Rivka. He runs to greet her. Why? What did he see that made him decide that this is the one? Rashi - quoting from our Sages - 'he saw that the water rose up to greet her'. How did the Sages know this? The Ramban explains that you can see it in the Pesukim. When she gave water to the camels it writes: "Vatishav l'chol g'malav" - 'She drew up for all the camels' - she had to draw it up. Here however, it writes "Vatameleh..." - implying that she filled it up without having to draw the water out. We see a clear difference. When she was drawing water for herself, the water came up by itself, whereas when she gave the camels to drink, she had to take the time to draw up the water. Why? The Kedushat Levi says: When

it comes to doing a Mitzvah, the harder it is and the more work we put in, the more reward we get. If the water would come up by a miracle, she wouldn't get so much reward. Therefore, Hashem didn't do that miracle for her, so she worked harder to do kindness.

The entry into Noah's ark teaches us the same idea: all the non-kosher animals came by themselves.

But the pure animals had to be brought by Noah. Why? All the animals had to be saved, explains the Ramban, but the kosher animals were also needed for another purpose, to be used as offerings after the flood. Noah had to put in extra effort for the Mitzvah in order to gain more reward.

Rav Nissan Kaplan of Jerusalem told me that he was once walking along the street in the pouring rain, when a passing taxi stopped nearby and the passenger - a friend of his - offered him a lift. This friend runs a major chesed organisation. When Rav Nissan entered the car, his friend explained that he had not asked the driver to stop straight away because he had not noticed that it was him. Rav Nissan replied 'You may as well close your organisation! You perform well publicised large chesed, but small acts of chesed, to help another person in the rain who you don't know, you wouldn't do? The small harder acts of chesed which also are not publicised are more difficult to do, and we therefore get more reward for them.'

A Yerushalmi chassid received a wedding invitation in the post, but he recognised no names from either side. Written on the invitation was a note - 'We really want you to come'. Not knowing what to make of it, he put it aside. A few weeks later he got a call asking if he was coming. "I don't know who you are!" the man said. "What do you mean?", came the reply, "if not for you, my daughter wouldn't be getting married." He told him the story. "A year ago we came to a hotel in Switzerland because our daughter was slipping away from her Mitzvah observance and we were advised to give her undivided attention on a holiday in Switzerland. While we were there, we saw no change in her. The night before we were leaving, as the taxi was coming in the middle of the night, we checked out early to avoid paying for another night and waited in the lobby. At two in the morning, five minutes before our



taxi arrived, you came down from your room with hot drinks and you accompanied us out to the taxi with our luggage. My daughter was so moved by this that she kept talking about it the entire way back to Israel, about how this Jew whom we hardly knew did such a true chesed. This was the cause of her turnaround.

Think about all the positivity that will come out from this woman and her future generations, all because of this man and the extra work he put in to doing a chesed. The easy kindnesses are for sure also great Mitzvot, but the more the input, the more the output!!



A Better Person

By R' Aharon Gillis

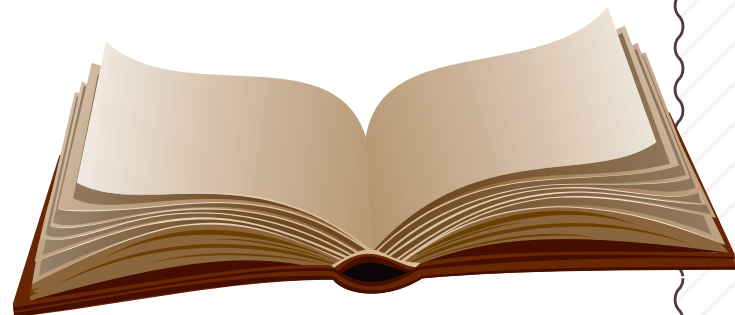
Yaakov is described in Toldot as a simple man who dwells in tents, an "ish tam yoshev ohalim". Chazal tell us that the "tents" refer to the houses of learning where Yaakov would study Torah. It would appear that being an ish tam (a simple person) is linked to being a yoshev ohalim. What is this connection?

To explain this, we first have to understand what being tam (simple) means. R' Chaim Friedlander explains - based on the Vilna Gaon's comments on Mishlei 2.21 - that there are two approaches to changing a bad midda (character trait). The first approach is that laid out by the Rambam in his introduction to Pirkei Avot called the Shemone Perakim, where he writes that to improve a negative trait one has to go to the other extreme. For example, someone who is too lazy should rush to do mitzvot; a person lacking kindness should continuously look for kind things to do - giving more tzedakah or inviting lots of guests. However, says the Rambam, taking a midda to an extreme is not ideal. For example, rushing to do everything may affect one's judgment. A little bit of patience is also a good thing. Excessive involvement in kindness and charity can also be detrimental: self-neglect; stress on the family; financial overload. In short, the person has to go to the extreme only for as long as it takes for him to change his bad trait; then he moves to a balanced and appropriate level, where he no longer has this bad trait but neither is he acting extremely.

The Vilna Gaon adds that there is another way of breaking a bad trait. This is someone who acts with temimut - simplicity - and does not rely on his own wisdom; rather he closely follows the Torah's guidance, avoiding the need to go to an extreme. This second approach needs clarification: Rabbi Friedlander explains that the Vilna Gaon is referring to someone who learns Torah, and especially Mussar - the ethical teachings - and takes what he is learning to heart. This person does not have to confront his faults by going to an extreme. Rather by learning Torah he cultivates his good inclination and tries to change his nature through the learning of Mussar and Torah wisdom. This will automatically diminish his evil inclination as he learns and internalises how to be a better person.

This, writes the Vilna Gaon, is the meaning of tam. He is "simple" because he does not rely on his own wisdom by trying to change himself using the strategy of going to an extreme. Rather he is simple and relies on the wisdom of the Torah to penetrate his heart and mind.

Now we understand why Yaakov is called an ish tam. His simplicity is his self-improvement through dedicated Torah study. This is the link between his 'tent-dwelling' and his simplicity. The result is a guarantee of a better person.





The Practice of Emuna

By R' David Schlama

One of our great men was once asked to leave everything behind to go to thrive in a better place.

That man was Avraham Avinu.

What did he find there? A land ravaged by war and famine, where wars of conquest had recently started. When he needs a burial site for his wife, he has to pay a fortune for it. That was the promised land? By all appearances, it was a hoax.

Moreover, Avraham's chief purpose was to help people achieve a meaningful and fulfilling life. Now, what can you teach in a war zone? What about the constant concern for food and survival? Is that the right context for teaching?

Yet, the backdrop of all of our father's history is encapsulated in one phrase: "He did not doubt [about Hashem]". This means he didn't ask himself any questions!

Now Avraham was known by his contemporaries as extremely thoughtful and deep. The prophet Yehoshua calls him "The great among the giants". We have a tradition

that he was more knowledgeable than the great scholars.

Furthermore, when we think about it, how could he persuade idol-worshippers to forgo established practices if not with outstanding insight and reflection?

How come then, that he didn't have second thoughts about his fate?

The answer is that Emuna and Trust in Hashem was for Avraham in no way theoretical: it was a reality his entire being vibrated with. As a result, he was serene in any situation beyond his understanding; these felt normal to him.

That is because he had fully grasped that any circumstance in life is truly adapted to the individual and ultimately turns out beneficial to all. That is the awesome wonder of Providence: to simultaneously provide all individuals with the precise challenges needed for their progress.

Sometimes we may think: "It seems so absurd, what good can come out of this. It's just an impediment. Hashem doesn't want me to serve Him?"

Whenever we have such thoughts, let us remember: Avraham was there. And only through accepting this did he become the illustrious Avraham.



Moving Through Life

By R' Moishe Wieder

What is the Torah's recipe for a life of greatness? Look at Parshat Chayei Sarah. We see that the units which made up the lives of both Avraham and Sarah are stressed, rather than just recording their respective ages. "Sarah's lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years...". And later "Now Abraham was old, well on in days...". We see from here the key to achieving greatness in life. Rather than viewing life as a murky conglomeration of days merging into years and eventually decades, we must value each day as an opportunity to take another step towards our eternal goals. Each day is a milestone in and of itself! If life is viewed in such a way, greatness is the obvious result.

Another idea - developed by R' Shimshon

Rafael Hirsch - is the use of the word "zaken" rather than "yashan" to describe Avraham's age. Although both words are translated into the same English word - "old", as R' Hirsch reiterates, every word of the Holy Tongue alludes to deeper ideas. Yashan is related to the word sheinah - sleep. This is the old age of somebody who has, by choice or otherwise, no longer any goals he is working towards, and continues to exist in a state of stasis. However, a "zaken" is the title of one who has used his years to his advantage, as the Talmud says, the word is an abbreviation of "Zeh shekanah chochmah" - one who has acquired wisdom. His state of physical old age is irrelevant. He exists internally in a state of perpetual motion, the true definition of youth - a state of constant growth. This was the trait of our forefathers, a trait which is ingrained in our heritage, accessible to every one of us, enabling us all to live the most fulfilling of lives all our years.



Inherent Qualities - Inheritable Qualities

By R' Chaim Tangy

Avraham left Ur Casdim and Charan after being persecuted for attempting to prove the reality of the Creator and the falsehood in idol worship to the local people. He arrived in Canaan where he set up a highly successful kiruv program. He spread an awareness of Hashem to all who came to hear him and had a following of tens of thousands of people.

When the time came to marry off his son Yitzchak, he sent his servant Eliezer on the mission to find the suitable girl. Avraham made him take an oath not to look in Canaan but rather to find Yitzchak's match in Charan. What did he have against the people of Canaan? And what was so special about the inhabitants of Charan?

Rabbeinu Nissim [Drashot Hara"n] explains that it is true that in Canaan there were a lot of people who were believers in Hashem, however they had bad character traits. Whereas in Charan, they had good midot; they 'just' didn't have Emuna, faith in Hashem.

When Avraham was going about building up the house of Israel, it had to be set on the right foundations. The Canaanites may have had plenty of believers, but beliefs and ideals are not necessarily passed on from parent to child, from generation to generation. They can easily be changed. Character traits, however, once truly internalised, will be transmitted in essence to a child. Inherent qualities are inheritable qualities.

Seeking G-d *By R' Yehiel Haddad*



When Rivka was having trouble with her pregnancy 'she went to seek G-d'. Where did she go to seek G-d? Rashi explains that she went to the yeshiva of Shem and Ever. The normal address for a health issue is the doctor [in Rivka's homeland no doubt a witch-doctor]. Rivka however went straight to G-d: she realised that just as G-d had given her the pain, He was the one that would save her from it. She was great enough to 'cut out the middle man'.

Rivka lived her life on a high spiritual plane, and we find great people even our generations who also look for the reasons behind and the solutions to their pain and sorrow in a similar fashion.

In his younger years Rabbi Yehuda Tsadka – former Rosh Yeshiva of Porat Yosef - was studying the laws of shechita. One day he was going from yeshiva to the slaughter house with his long sharp shechita knife in the inner pocket of his jacket. On his way through the Arab shuk,

he passed a group of teenagers, one of whom suddenly blocked his path, trying to push him to the ground. To stop his victim defending himself, he put his hand inside Rabbi Yehuda's jacket. He screamed at the top of his lungs as the sharp blade cut his fingers. Now the lone yeshiva bochur could feel the murderous eyes of the rapidly growing crowd gathering around, thirsty for the taste of revenge. Running for his life he miraculously made it to the police station before he could be harmed.

The police did not believe his story and sent him to court. During the hearing false witnesses appeared to be materialising out of thin air; one after another they accused the tsaddik of attempted murder. Astonishingly the judge let him off with only a fine to pay.

Once freed Rabbi Yehuda started thinking about the reason why all this suffering had been decreed on him: his conclusion was that it was because on that same day he gave up a certain minhag. Instead of seeing no further than getting back at the people who had tried to frame him, he looked for the deeper cause and effect: he went to seek G-d.