א ביסל תורה!

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י״ט חשון תשפ״ז · **וירא**

Why is ישמעאל Saved by a Miracle?

By Nessa Jaffe '27

In פרשת וירא, soon after יצחק is born, שרה tells אברהם to kick ישמעאל out of the house. When ישמעאל is kicked out he and הגר wonder in the desert. ישמעאל gets sick, and finishes all the water. הגר is very sad and starts crying. An angel appears to הגר and says to not worry "כי שמע אלוקים את קול הנער באשר הוא שם" "For G-d heard the voice of the lad that he was there" (בראשית כ״א: י״ז). For G-d has heard the voice of the boy in that he is there, and shows her a well.

רש״י explains this interesting phrase to mean that Hashem is "judging the boy" - ישמעאל, based on where he is now. רש״י explains that the angels were crying to Hashem and asking how could He do a נס for ישמעאל? His descendants, the Arabs, will kill many Jews, and they will only exist if Hashem does a miracle for them now. Hashem responds and says that He has heard the boy's תפילה "באשר הוא שם" - "where he is now." It might be true that in the future ישמעאל's kids will kill many Jews, but he hasn't done anything yet. Right now he is a צדיק, and, therefore, I (Hashem) will perform the miracle.

This is a lovely מדרש with a beautiful message, but there is one clear problem with it. In this מדרש it says that ישמעאל was a צדיק. But as רש״י explains 8 פסוקים earlier, the reason why שרה originally kicked ישמאל out of the house was because he was committing idolatry, adultery and murder - the big three!! He was by no means a צדיק!

There are a few answers to this question, but none of them are great but here are a few. מזרחי (a supercommentary on רש״י) explains that the thing that ישמעאל was a צדיק in were sins relating to water. The specific sin that רש״י was referring to, that the Arabs would kill the Jews with, was water. When the Jews were going out into exile they were very thirsty, and they saw their brothers, the sons of ישמעאל. They asked them for water, but ישמעאל's descendants decided not to give them water, instead they gave them salty fish and empty water bottles. The Jews ate the fish and were very thirsty so they tried to drink from the water bottles but they were empty, so they died of thirst! This explains why the angels were appalled that Hashem would make a נס for ישמעאל that has to do with water. The people would, in the future, kill Jews by not giving them water, Hashem would do a נס for them and give him water?! That is when Hashem says He is going to perform a נס for the נער based on where he is now, he hasn't sinned in any way involving water yet.

Although the מדרש might be a little more limited than originally thought to be, as Hashem knows ישמעאל will eventually sin, but the lesson it presents is still very true. Hashem never judges us badly based on our future. He sees us where we are now.

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Welcoming Guests Despite the Pain

By Adina Cheses '28

In this week's פרשה, the phrase "וישכם אברהם בבקר" "and early the next morning אברהם woke up" is repeated three times. Firstly, following the destruction of סדום, again, just before he sends הגר away, and a third time on the morning of עקידת יצחק. Each of these moments was incredibly vulnerable, tense, and difficult for אברהם, and in each one he still gets up and follows what Hashem has instructed him to do. חז"ל teach that the purpose of this phrase is to teach us that אברהם jumped at the chance to do mitzvot. Even when they were challenging, he was filled with excitement at any opportunity to fulfill Hashem's commands.

This idea of stepping up even in difficult moments is especially relevant to the nature of הכנסת אורחים. הכנסת אורחים entails taking in travelers in need, even though it may be inconvenient. This principle is directly demonstrated in the opening of our פרשה. When the angels arrive at their tent, אברהם urges שרה to prepare bread to welcome them,

"וַיְמַהֵר אַבְרָהָם הָאֹהֱלָה אֶל־שָׂרָה וַיֹּאמֶר מַהֲרִי שְׁלֹשׁ סְאִים קֶמַח סֹלֶת לוּשִׁי וַעֲשִׂי עֻגוֹת", "אברהם rushed into the tent to שרה and said, 'Quick, [prepare] three seahs of choice flour! Knead and make cakes!'" (בראשית יח:ו). This פסוק places strong emphasis on how quickly אברהם jumps to do this מצווה despite being in extreme pain, having just received a ברית מילה.

This story teaches us the מצוה of הכנסת אורחים, and the details can teach us a lot about it. אברהם takes them in, not during a convenient time, but in a moment of immense discomfort. This is why אברהם is the right person to teach us about this מצווה. He demonstrates that the principle of "וישכם אברהם בבקר" is at the heart of הכנסת אורחים. This incredibly special מצווה is so much more than inviting friends over for lunch because you feel like it. Yes, it is nice to welcome friends and family into your home, but the significance of הכנסת אורחים is so much more than that.

הכנסת אורחים is the מצוה to take on the burden of providing a traveler in need with food and shelter. Welcoming a stranger into your home is not easy; it is time-consuming, uncomfortable, and often awkward. What we can learn from אברהם is that despite this difficulty, we should jump at the chance to help out in this scenario, seizing the opportunity to do such an important מצוה.



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