



Parashat Vayera - #303

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On the Parashah...
Avraham Who Loves Mankind
[Tal Chermon]

Avraham is depicted as a man of immense kindness. He risked his life to save Lot, he hosted unknown guests and even tried to save Sedom from destruction. His actions starkly contrast with those of Noach, who upon being told by G-d that He was about to destroy the whole world, did not utter a single word of protest (Zohar, part 1, p. 67b). Even the episode of Sarah and Avimelech can be construed as an act of kindness on Avraham's part. When Sarah was abducted by Pharaoh, Avraham asked her to pose as his sister so that they would treat him well, and through her efforts his life would be spared (Bereshit 12:13). In the case of Avimelech, however, no justification for this deception is given: Avraham simply announced that Sarah was his sister. This change is obviously done to teach us something. Avraham's love for Sarah was in a sense fraternal, a pure and idealistic love that involved no feelings of jealousy or possessiveness that are so often present in a husband-wife relationship. Avraham Avinu had no selfish and petty reasons for keeping her for himself. She was thus theoretically free to go and become the wife of Avimelech if she chose to do so. Such a choice was obviously a legal and moral impossibility and Sarah did not entertain it at all. From Avraham's point of view, it was possible (See Talks by Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah on Parashat Vayera summarized by Rav Ilan Tor). Kindness stems from the ability to see the Divine light and content that exists in every creation. And thus Avraham, who saw the G-dly illumination in all creatures, loved them all.

Rav Aviner on...
I'm a Fighter!

Part I

Yes, I'm a fighter! True, that seems bad, but sometimes there's no choice. It's not respectable nor acceptable, but I don't care. Therefore, I fight.

When someone is weak and spineless, he gets trampled to no end. The world is full of naïve people who praise appeasement and then meet a bitter end. Therefore, you must be serious and responsible, and attack.

I never attack without cause, spurred by aggressive passions. I, too, love peace and quiet. Yet as the Latin saying goes, *Si vis pacem, para bellum*, “If you want peace, prepare for war.” I attack only the enemy. And obviously I don't wait for him to attack me in order to defend myself. That's too late. I hasten the cure before the disease, waging battle in the enemy's gates. The best defense is a preventative attack.

I enjoyed seeing what Rabbi Yitzchak Arama wrote in his *Akeidat Yitzchak*: “Man is born a fighter. G-d, as well, whose pathways we follow, is a “man of war”, a warrior, causing salvation to burgeon forth.

Part II

Whom do I fight against? I'm not a lowlife. I bear no pathological fear of enemies lying in wait at every turn. I also know how to give in and to put myself aside. I do not say that anyone who does not belong to my group is an enemy. No, I investigate and think and bone up on the issue, until I go to war. Yet once I have made up my mind, I go for the whole stake, waging a life-and-death battle to the end, until my enemy is totally liquidated, unable to rise. I invest great energy in this, endangering my own life, because my own life is at stake.

That is the concept of total war. As the great theoretician Carl von Clausewitz said, or as the French say, “A la guerre comme a la guerre – “In war as in war”.

Who, then, is my enemy? Evil! It drives me out of my mind! I hate it and fight it wherever I encounter it. By such means I perform a good, not just for myself but for everyone. And please don't tell me, “Who are you and what are you? For a lowlife like you to hoist up the flag of war against evil.” For I will tell you: True, I'm a lowlife. I must therefore fight evil. For if I do not fight evil, I shall remain a lowlife.

Part III

Where do I find so much evil? The answer to that is the easiest to know and the hardest to act upon. It's in me. I fight against the evil within me. Not within others. How brazen it would be of me to fight the evil in others but not in myself! That itself would constitute a terrible evil.

I do not want to be evil! I did not say that I would be a saint, but I don't want to be a sinner. I don't want to be captive to the Devil. I don't want to be a wild man or a pagan.

It's true that I'm not worth a lot and I don't dare to claim that I am something special, or that I will be. All the same, against evil I do not compromise. And I don't go easy on myself either. I will fight any sin, any negligence regarding a good trait, any evil trait.

Such is my quest, and when I succeed, even a little bit, I feel everlasting joy. How happy I am!

I didn't make any of this up. I saw it all in rabbinical treatises on fine behavior.

To be sure, life is no picnic. It's no playground. It's war, and I am thrilled to go to battle.

Won't you join me?

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Accidental Radio on on Shabbat

Question: The radio was accidentally connected to the Shabbat timer, and it turned on. What should one do in such a case?

Answer: There are three options: 1. Put a blanket over it. 2. Turn the dial on the timer to turn off in 5-10 minutes and the radio will turn off indirectly (Gerama). 3. If the volume is controlled by a knob (not an electric button), you can turn the volume down with a "shinui" (an unusual way, i.e. with your thumb, back-handed, etc.)

Askenazi in non-Ashkenaz Minyan

Question: Should an Ashkenazi Jew davening with a Sefardic or Nusach Sefard minyan say Tachanun when they are saying the Vidui or when they also put their heads down?

Answer: It does not matter. When he is the only one in the Minyan who is Ashkenazi he should also say the Vidui because of "Lo Titgodedu – do not make different groups," but today most Minyanim in Israel are mixed. It is explicitly written that when the community is saying Aleinu one should also at least bow when others do, since it is said at different times in the davening.

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