

Olam Chessed Yibaneh – Nitzavim-Vayeilech

השעור מקדש לרפואת שמעונה בת שרה

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אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני ה' א-לקיכם ראשיכם שבטיכם זקניכם ושטריכם
כל איש ישראל. טפכם נשיכם וגרד אשר בקרב מחניד מחטב עציך עד שאב מימך.
(דברים כט, ט-י)

Parshat Nitzavim always precedes Rosh HaShana. In a previous shiur ([Nitzavim 2025](#)), we discussed the topic of "tree choppers" and "water drawers" as they relate to Adam HaRishon and tikkun olam. This year, I would like to explore the subject from a different angle, focusing on another famous tree chopper, Avraham Avinu and another famous water drawer – Rivka Imeinu.

We all know the famous Midrash (בראשית רבה ח, ה) that tells how HKB"H, before He created Adam HaRishon, first asked the angels whether to create man or not. The angels split into different factions, as it says ... חסד ואמת נפגשו. Emet said "Don't create man, because he is full of lies". What did HKB"H do? He took Emet and "threw it to the ground", as it says (דניאל ח, יב) ותשלך אמת ארצה. The horrified angels said to HKB"H "Ribon HaOlamim, how can you demean your 'seal' (אמת is HKB"H's seal) like that? Raise it up from the ground, as it says (תהילים פה, יב) אמת מארץ תצמח (תהילים פה, יב).

When HKB"H created Adam HaRishon, what kind of creature did He intend to create? According to the Midrash (בראשית רבה יד, ו), R' Levi says that Avraham is called (יהושע יד, טו) הגדול בענקים because Avraham was *meant to be Adam HaRishon*, but HKB"H said "If I create Avraham as Adam HaRishon and he sins, there will be nobody to follow and fix his sin".

Therefore, HKB"H's vision for mankind was that we should be akin to Avraham Avinu. Avraham Avinu is Chessed. HKB"H accepted the argument of "Chessed" and not the argument of "Emet". If Emet would have won the debate, mankind would never have been created in the first place.

Creating humans was a Chessed, HKB"H created us *because of* Chessed, and we have to "return the favor" by living our lives entirely doing Chessed, like Avraham Avinu.

This is not to say that the only "pillar of the world" is Chessed. The world exists because of *three* pillars מְשִׁיבֵי הָהָר הַגְּדוֹלָה. הוא הִנֵּה אֲמַר, עַל שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד : עַל הַתּוֹרָה, וְעַל הָעֲבוּדָה, וְעַל גְּמִילוּת הַסָּדִים (אבות א, ב). The three pillars are – Torah, Avodah and Chessed.

This is א, ב, the "aleph bet" of the Avot. All three of the Avot studied and taught Torah, did Avodah (brought korbanot) and did Chessed, but each placed *emphasis* on a different "pillar".

Yaakov placed the emphasis on Torah (בראשית) יִשְׁבּ אֱהָלִים. Yitzchak placed emphasis on Avodah – he was a korban *himself*, at the Akeida. Avraham emphasized Chessed. Avraham was the first of the Avot, the first pillar, which teaches us that in order for the pillars of Torah and Avodah to be built, you first have to have the pillar of Chessed. Chessed is the foundation pillar out of which the Torah and Avodah pillars emerge.

There was a major difference between Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. Yitzchak and Yaakov were *born* Jewish. Avraham was not - he was מְתֵיבֵיר. Avraham was not spoon-fed Torah and Avodah as a baby - he acquired it on his own. Avraham's neshama from birth already had the potential, the נִיצוץ of Torah and Avodah, and this spark was ignited directly by HKB"H Himself, unlike Yitzchak and Yaakov, whose "sparks" were lit by their parents.

Avraham comes to teach us a fundamental principle - in order to acquire Torah and serve HKB"H, you *first need to be a kind person*, you have to do Chessed – (וּיְקָרָא רַבָּה ט, ג).

Avraham taught Torah through the medium of Chessed, establishing an אָבֱרָהָם in Be'er Sheva, radiating kindness to whoever came his way, being makpid to do the Chessed as much as possible himself, running after calves to serve in the meals, dishing up platters of gourmet food that you couldn't find anywhere else, like calf tongues in mustard sauce. Sharing the Chessed with other members of his family, Sarah making the bread, Yishmael doing the shechita, etc.

People are naturally attracted to acts of kindness, Chessed - it is part of the blueprint of Creation and thus attracts masses of people, like a magnet attracts metal. People who see other people doing Chessed, want to be like them, they want to learn to be **אֲנֹכִי חֶסֶד** themselves. Avraham learned his Chessed in that way, from Shem, the son of Noach (who we spoke about in last week's [shiur](#)). Shem told Avraham about all the Chessed they did with the animals in the Ark and Avraham immediately connected with this and wanted to emulate it. Avraham took Noach and his sons' Chessed to a completely new level, the highest level imaginable – which is why Avraham is the yardstick for Chessed. Avraham did not suffice with waiting for people to come visit him in

Be'er Sheva (like Noach), Avraham traveled the length and breadth of the land, digging wells to give free water to passers-by, doing Chessed.

This is not to say that Avraham did not study and teach Torah, he was the *posek hador*. When the three angels came to visit him after his brit milah, Gavriel (whose job was to destroy Sdom) first had to make a "pitstop" at Avraham to get a psak halacha whether to save Lot or not (see shiur on [Balak 2025](#)). Avraham taught Sarah the halachot of chametz and making matzot on Pesach מַהְרֵי שְׁלֵשׁ סְאִים קֶמַח סֵלֶת לְוִשִׁי וְעֶשְׂי עֲגוֹת (בראשית יח, ו) קִבְּלַת פָּנֵי שְׂכִינָה (סוטה י, ע"א) (שבת קכז ע"א), accompanying guests after a meal (פסחים ד, ע"א) (בבא מציעא, פו ע"ב) אָמַר מְעַט וְעֵשָׂה הַרְבֵּה, (פסחים ד, ע"א) fixing a מְקוֹם קְבוּעַ to daven (ברכות ו, ע"ב), amongst many others.

Avraham's mission was to teach others Torah, through the medium of Chessed. What a profound lesson to all teachers. If you want to make an indelible impression on your students, the best way to do it is by being a kind person, Chessed – really and truly caring about others.

This is why Avraham did not want his son Yitzchak to marry the daughter of Eliezer. Eliezer the servant of Avraham, was Avraham's star pupil, he was a genius, managed Avraham's entire household and in whose hands Avraham entrusted everything. However, this was not the kind of wife Avraham wanted for Yitzchak, not the daughter of a "shpitz lamdan" or a CEO extraordinaire, but rather an eshet Chessed. This is the mission Avraham sent Eliezer on – to find a wife for Yitzchak who radiated Chessed.

In parshat Chayei Sarah we read about the "test" that Eliezer devised to determine whether the woman was an eshet Chessed or not. וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-לְקִי. אֲדֹנִי אֲבִרְהָם הִקְרָה נָא לִפְנֵי הַיּוֹם וְעֵשָׂה חֶסֶד עִם אֲדֹנִי אֲבִרְהָם (בראשית כד, יב) How do you determine such a thing, just by observing the woman, without really knowing her? Eliezer's first observation of Rivka was that she was very beautiful, but that was just a bonus, it wasn't part of the test. The test involved selflessness, going way beyond the norm.

It was usually the women who went to draw water from the well. Asking a small girl (3 according to Rashi, 14 according to Seder Olam) to give you some of her water to drink, is not so far-fetched and probably the norm. However, if the girl offers not only to give *you* to drink, but also to make many, many repeat trips to the well to give your numerous camels to drink (do you know how much camels drink in one shot? Over 100 liters per camel), that is certainly not the norm and only in the realm of over-the-top Chessed. The same level as Avraham's Chessed, like chasing after a runaway calf all the way from Be'er Sheva to Hebron, just so you can give your three guests three calf tongues in mustard sauce - 62km of "jogging" after just having a brit milah three days before! Nobody in their "right mind" would even consider such a thing – except

for Avraham, except for Rivka – their Chessed was "prototype maximum level", upon which everything else is graded.

Interestingly, Rivka was also not born Jewish. Just as HKB"H *Himself* ignited the spark of Chessed in Avraham's neshama, so too did He in Rivka's. Neither of them got it from their environment. Quite the contrary, the "chessed" that Rivka learned in her home of birth was the totally opposite, perverted kind of "chessed" - forbidden relations within the family (ויקרא כ, יז). The Gemara (מסכת סופרים כא) says that Rivka's father Betuel was very devout in upholding the Aramite "custom" of fathers having relations with their virgin daughters before they got married. Only by miracle was Rivka spared this.

Rivka knew how to distinguish between the two opposite poles of Chessed (good) and "chessed" (evil). She therefore recognized Eisav's evil behavior a mile away, because she had grown up around it as a child. Yitzchak, who grew up in Avraham's home, couldn't see it.

Thus, we have the chopper of trees, מַחֲטֵב עֵצִים - in gematria אַבְרָהָם (with the כּוֹלֵל). Prior to the Akeida, Avraham chopped down wood for the korban וַיִּשְׁכֶּם אַבְרָהָם בְּבֶקֶר... וַיִּבְקַע עֵצִי עֵלָה (בראשית כב, ג). Why shlep wood 104km from Be'er Sheva to Yerushalayim? Why not cut down wood in Yerushalayim? What, the area of Yerushalayim is short of trees?

Just as Avraham was "over-the-top" in his Chessed towards other people, so too was he in his service of HKB"H. "What if there is a tiny, tiny chance that I won't find wood at the destination? Maybe there will be wood, but maybe it is worm ridden?" (pasul for a korban). Avraham was not taking chances.

In merit of this over-the-top level of devotion to HKB"H, Avraham's descendants, Am Yisrael merited the splitting of Yam Suf. וַיִּבְקַע עֵצִי עֵלָה... (שמות יד, כא).

It was this "gold standard" in Chessed that Eliezer was looking for in a wife for Avraham's son Yitzchak, which is why he gave Rivka נָזַם זָהָב בְּקָע מְשָׁקְלוֹ (בראשית כד, כב), the same gold stamp of Avraham Avinu. Rivka and Avraham were from the same "stock" of Chessed, the gematria of שְׁאֵב מִימִיָּהּ is אַבְרָהָם.

Ultimate Chessed is the template, the blueprint of Creation, designed by HKB"H (using ש-ד-י, the name He appeared to the Avot with [שמות ו, ג]). The same blueprint imprinted in Avraham Avinu חֲטֵב עֵצִים and the same blueprint imprinted in Rivka לִמְנוּ שְׁאֵב מִימִיָּהּ.

This blueprint ש-ד-י/אברהם/רבקה is the model for all future generations, the gold standard upon which all future generations are based and derived from.

Some examples –

The gematria of עץ/נחש/אדם/אשה - הוא is ש-ד-י/אברהם/רבקה and also תיקון לזמן העץ ואכל (בראשית ג, יב) - tikkun for the sin of Adam and Chava.

This supreme level of Chessed, which Rivka embodied, enabled her son Yaakov to become the עמוד התורה, which represents אמת, as it says תתן אמת (לעקב) (מיכה ז, כ). Torah only grows in the fertile ground of Chessed (as we saw above with Avraham). This is what HKB"H said to the angels when He threw אמת to the ground. The gematria of ש-ד-י/אברהם/רבקה is - מארץ תצמח (תהילים). For true אמת to emerge, it first requires Chessed in which to grow.

The gematria of שבע שנים (בראשית כט, יח) - ש-ד-י/אברהם/רבקה referring to Rachel Imeinu, wife of Yaakov, who also reflected this level of Chessed, with her sister Leah.

The gematria of שפחה פועה - מוטב עציף עד שאב מימיו is שפחה פועה, who, through ultimate Chessed reared the multitudes who eventually formed Am Yisrael.

The gematria of שפחה וחסנה איננו אכל (שמות) - ש-ד-י/אברהם/רבקה referring to Moshe Rabbeinu, whose mother and sister שפחה/יוכבד פועה/מרים embodied this same Chessed.

The gematria of לא תבשל גדי בחלב אמו - ש-ד-י/אברהם/רבקה. The reason we have this prohibition is – because it is cruelty, the opposite of Chessed.

The gematria of מלחמה לה' בעמלק מדר זר - ש-ד-י/אברהם/רבקה, to destroy the antithesis of Chessed in the world.

In a previous shiur ([Nitzavim 2025](#)) we noted that the passuk says מוטב עציף עד שאב מימיו, a "from - to" range. If that is the case, the "from" should be one extreme and the "to" the other extreme. Here we have two examples which are *on the same level*, choppers of wood to drawers of water. The reason is because they are both referring to Chessed. When it comes to doing Chessed, everyone is on the same level.

Unlike giving Tzedaka, for example, there *is* a difference to the recipient if a rich donor gives them a million dollars, or if a poor donor gives them ten dollars. Similarly, there is a difference in studying Torah, between someone with a high IQ and someone with a low IQ, the one will be able to study and understand more than the other.

Chessed, however, is not dependent on your starting "stats" - whether you are rich, poor, smart, dumb, healthy, unhealthy etc. Kindness is possible from

everyone, regardless of who they are. Treating people kindly does not require you to be rich or smart, athletic, good looking, etc. It is a character trait that any human being can develop – it is the baseline for humanity, from when HKB"H created the world. It is the main foundation pillar upon which the world exists.

What does all of this have to do with Rosh HaShana? We read parshat Nitzavim every year the Shabbat before Rosh HaShana, because Nitzavim harbors secrets to teach us how to approach Rosh HaShana the correct way.

One of these secrets is that unless we arrive at Rosh HaShana with a *high level of Chessed*, we are in deep trouble!

The gematria of וְחִיל וּרְעָדָה יֵאָחֲזוּן וַיֹּאמְרוּ הֵינָּה יוֹם - ש-ד-י/אברהם/רבקה is - הדין. The angels are scurrying around in fear and trepidation, because the Day of Judgement has arrived. One of the major features of Rosh HaShana is that we blow the shofar. This year, since the first day of Rosh HaShana is on Shabbat, we will only blow the shofar on the second day (Sunday).

Why do we blow the shofar on Rosh HaShana? The Midrash (פסיקתא) explains that blowing the shofar moves HKB"H from כְּסֵא הַדִּין (דבר כהנא כג, ג) to כְּסֵא הַרְחֵמִים. How does this mechanism work?

The origin of the shofar is Avraham Avinu. At the Akeida (which we read about on the 2nd day of Rosh HaShana), Avraham was ready to sacrifice Yitzchak, when suddenly the angel (שָׁטֵן) who wanted to test Avraham, said "Stop!" Out of nowhere a ram suddenly appeared with its horns caught in a thicket, וַיִּשָּׂא אֲבְרָהָם אֶת עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה אֵיל אַחֵר נֶאֱחָז בְּסִבְךְּ בְּקֶרְנָיו (בראשית כב, יג). Avraham sacrificed the ram instead of Yitzchak. When you bring a ram as a korban olah, not all of the animal is offered, some parts are removed first, like the horns which are partially detached from the head. What happened to the two horns of this ram?

The Midrash (פרקי דרבי אליעזר, פרק לא) says that the left, smaller horn was used as the shofar at Matan Torah and the right, larger horn is hidden somewhere in storage and will be blown when Mashiach arrives.

We blow the shofar on Rosh HaShana to remind HKB"H of the Akeida and Avraham, the epitome of Chessed. When HKB"H hears the shofar, He therefore moves from כְּסֵא הַדִּין to כְּסֵא הַחֶסֶד/רְחֵמִים in the merit of Avraham.

In addition, if each of us exemplified ourselves with Chessed during the year prior to Rosh HaShana, על אַחַת כְּמָה וְכְמָה, that HKB"H moves from כְּסֵא הַדִּין to כְּסֵא הַחֶסֶד/רְחֵמִים in our merit as well. The more Chessed we have done, the quicker HKB"H moves (kiveyachol). For those of us who have done less, HKB"H doesn't move as quickly. For those who have less Chessed under their

belt, we have a longer period of time to catch up, מִחֻטֵּב עֲצִיד, from the Akeida/Rosh HaShana, עַד שְׁאֵב מִימֶיךָ, in gematria חַג סְכוּת (or at least the day before – הוֹשַׁעְנָה רַבָּה) to fix things.

The word נֶצְבִּים appears a total of 18 times throughout Tanach, gematria of נֶחֱ. If we apply the lessons that Nitzavim teaches us, we have a very good chance of traversing the נִוְרָאִים יָמִים successfully and coming out alive. The gematria of וַבָּאוּ עָלֶיךָ כָּל הַבְּרָכוֹת הָאֵלֶּה - ש-ד-י/אברהם/רבקה is.

Not all of us can become a Moshe Rabbeinu or a R' Akiva, but each and every one of us has the capability of achieving the same level of Chessed as Avraham Avinu. It doesn't require a high IQ or being rich, all it requires is kindness in our hearts.

Finally, the gematria of ש-ד-י/אברהם/רבקה is יִשְׂרָאֵל – דָּגֵל אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל. This is the true flag of our nation, a nation of kindness and Chessed.

Shabbat Shalom and כְּתִיבָה וְחִתִּימָה לְאַלְתֶּר לְחַיִּים טוֹבִים וּלְשָׁלוֹם

Eliezer Meir Saidel

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