

ONEG!

A collection of fascinating material on the weekly parsha!

Rabbi Elchanan Shoff

PARSHAS VAYERA

And Hashem appeared to him [Avraham] at the Plains of Mamre, and he was sitting at the entrance of the tent (Gen. 18:1). R. Avrohom Yehoshua Heschel of Apta writes in *Ohev Yisroel* (beginning of *Parshas Vayera*) in the name of R. Moshe of Peshvorsk that Abraham was so humble in his own eyes, that he thought that he is not worthy of God's Holy Presence (*shechinah*) to manifest itself on his account. Rather, he thought that his friend Mamre was the righteous person whose merits brought the *shechinah*. According to this, he interprets the opening verse of our Parshah to read: "And it appeared to him [i.e. to Abraham] that Hashem was [only allowing His *shechinah* to dwell in] the Plains of Mamre". In other words, Abraham's humility led him to think that only Mamre was a righteous person, and he himself was not yet righteous, he was only "sitting at the entrance of the Tent [of Holiness]" but had not yet entered. This indeed is the way of *tzadikim*; even though they serve Hashem their entire lives, they still imagine in their hearts and thoughts that they have not yet really even started to properly worship Him and they are only at the "entrance" to holiness. It seems to me that we can explain this further. We know that humility is a prerequisite to being able to relate to God. (See Sotah 5a). When a person is self-centered, though, and focused on himself, revelation is impossible. Thus, the Jewish people stood a Sinai, the smallest mountain, representing the humility needed to receive the Torah. As the gemara writes (Taanis 7a) Torah is likened to water. Just as water always flows from the higher spot to the lower spot, so does Torah leave the higher spot for the lower spot. Accepting the truth of Torah is an exercise in humility. It seems then, that the fact that Avraham saw the good in others and simply didn't focus on his own greatness was actually the reason that he merited God's revelation to him! Thus, Hashem appeared to him, due to his disposition that always saw the good in others, but didn't focus too much on patting himself on the back, but instead of remaining humble at all times. This allowed for him to have the relationship that he did with Hashem.

In the sefer *Beis Shmuel Acharon* of R. Shmuel Falkenfeld (*Parshas Eikev*), he records that he heard in the name of the Maggid of Mezritch: The Talmud (*Kesuvos* 110b) says that anybody who lives in the [Holy] Land is as though he has a God, and anybody who lives outside of the [Holy] Land is as though he does not have a God. He explains this passage differently. R. Bachaya Ibn Faquda in *Chovos Ha-Levavos* (*Sbaar Avodas Hashem*, ch. 3) writes that the righteous people of long ago spent their entire lives in a state of constant repentance because each day they would understand on increasingly deeper levels the extent of the greatness of Hashem, and would therefore realize that the previous day they had not properly been worshipping Hashem. From this we see, that the more one understands Hashem, the better one can serve Him. Now the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 98:1) says regarding prayer, one

*Much of the material presented in **Oneg!** has been translated from Rabbi Elchanan Shoff's weekly **Aalefcha Chochma** parsha sheet in Hebrew by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein. To sign up to the **Oneg!** weekly email list, or to sponsor a week of **Oneg!** send an email to BKLAshul@gmail.com*

who properly worships Hashem can transcend the physicality of his existence and become a spiritual entity. According to this, the Maggid of Mezritch explains that one who lives “in the land” means that he has not yet transcended the physical, but lives “in the land”. Such a person has not yet had a chance to truly understand Hashem, so he is “as though he has a God” because he thinks that whatever worship of Hashem he does, he is fulfilling his duties. On the other hand, one who lives “outside of the land” means that he has transcended the physical, and lives on an entirely spiritual plane of existence. Such a person can now be exposed to a deeper understanding of Hashem. This person is “as though he does not have a God” because the more he understands God, the more he realizes that however he had previously worshipped Him before was completely misguided. [See also *Likkutei Basar Likkutei* (to *Kesuvos* 110b) who adds to this some original thoughts.] His conclusion is that paradoxically, only a person who sees Hashem's greatness enough to feel that he is *not* serving Hashem sufficiently, can really be said to be serving Hashem sufficiently.

And Hashem appeared to him... (Gen. 18:1). The Midrash (*Beresbis Rabbah* 47:10) relates that after his circumcision, Avraham was perturbed that no guests had appeared at his tent. Avraham rhetorically asked, “Before my circumcision, the passersby would come to me, now that I had my circumcision, they do not come to me?” Hashem answered him, “before you were circumcised, humans came to you, now, I with all My glory will come and reveal Myself to you”. R. Yosef Shaul Nathanson (*Divrei Shaul, Mahadura Kamma, Parshas Vayeira s.v. vayera*) explains the deeper meaning behind this exchange. When Avraham was bothered his lack of guests, it was not just because he wanted more chances to perform kindness to others. Rather, Avraham also wanted the guests in order to strengthen his own personal religious convictions.¹ The Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 17a) says that if the entire court of 23 judges convicts somebody of a capital crime, then he is off the hook. Because since the decision was unanimous, without any dissent, we assume that the court had not arrived at the whole truth. This is because one can only arrive at the truth through proper debate and discussion, and seeing multiple sides to a matter. If *everybody* agrees, then it is far too likely that the opposing side was never seriously considered and thus not refuted. By this token, Avraham too wanted to strengthen his belief in Hashem by hosting heathens who would debate his beliefs and allow him to sharpen his arguments for the existence of God. When Avraham would debate these non-believers, he would seriously consider joining them if they could present a compelling argument. The fact that he would seriously consider the other side, would then make his decision to continue believing in Hashem all the more significant. It is

¹ The Talmud (*Sotah* 10b) says that Abraham would bring his guests to verbally give thanks to Hashem. After feeding them, his guests would come to thank him, but he would tell the guests, “Don't thank me! What you ate was not from me. You ate from the Master of the World's food. Thank and praise The One Who brought the world into existence”.

ONEG!

A collection of fascinating material on the weekly parsha!

Rabbi Elchanan Shoff

PARSHAS VAYERA

for this reason that Avraham wished to host guests after his circumcision, just like he did beforehand. When Hashem responded, He explained to Avraham that now that he has been circumcised, he cannot possibly join up with non-believers because he is completely different in kind. He has a circumcision, and those with a circumcision cannot go back to be uncircumcised as the Talmud in *Sanbedrin* 39 records the episode when a certain Roman Caesar suggested to R. Tanchum that "we should all be the same", meaning that the Jews should change and assimilate to be like the Romans, and R. Tanchum replied - very well, we Jews are circumcised so we can't change that part but you can change to adapt to us and all circumcise yourselves! The presence of circumcision is used there to show a difference between people of fundamental nature, after which one cannot go back to his state before. If so, then debating guests will not help Abraham strengthen his belief in God, because he cannot possibly entertain joining them if they could successfully win the debate. Instead, Hashem says "I with all My glory will come and reveal Myself to you", meaning that Abraham will not sharpen his belief in Hashem through debating passersby who will help him reach the truth, but that Hashem will grant him Divine wisdom in order to intuit the truth.

And Hashem appeared to him [Avraham] at the Plains of Mamre, and he [Avraham] was sitting at the entrance of the tent as the day heated up (Gen. 18:1). R. Yaakov Chaim Sofer (author of the *Kaf Ha-Chaim*) writes in his work *Yagel Yaakov* that this hints to the idea that one who endlessly toils in Torah study and is not hindered by the cold or the heat or any other elements, can merit to see the *shechinah* in the Upper Garden of Eden with all the righteous people. As we say, in the future, all the righteous people will be sitting, and their crowns will be upon their heads, and they will enjoy the splendor of the *shechinah*. With this, he offers an exegetical explication of the verse at hand: "And Hashem appeared to him at the Plains of Mamre" refers to Hashem appeared to the righteous in the Upper Garden of Eden, as *mamre* (ממרא) is an expression of heights (התרוממות). When it continues to say: "And he was sitting at the entrance of the tent", this means that said revelation will only come to somebody who was sitting the "tent"—which refers to the *Beis Midrash* (as we find concerning Joshua that he never moved "from within the tent" which means that he continually stood by Moses' side to learn Torah). When it says: "as the day heated up" this means that the aforementioned revelation to Torah Scholars only applies to those who continue to study even when it was very hot outside, or there were other excuses for a person to refrain from studying Torah, and he continued to do so.

For I know him—that he will command his sons and his household after him, and they will safeguard the way of Hashem to do righteousness and justice... (Gen. 18:19). Baal Ha-Turim and *Priush ha-Rokeach* point out that the final letters of the words of

Much of the material presented in **Oneg!** has been translated from Rabbi Elchanan Shoff's weekly **Aalefcha Chochma** parsha sheet in Hebrew by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein. To sign up to the **Oneg!** weekly email list, or to sponsor a week of **Oneg!** send an email to BKLAshul@gmail.com

the phrase “that he will command his sons” (אשר יצוה את בניו) spell out the word Torah (תורה). Similarly, Baal Ha-Turim writes that the *gematria* of the term “that he will command” (אשר יצוה = 612) equals that of the word Torah (תורה = 611 + 1). R. Chaim Palagi (*Birkas Moadecha LeChaim* vol. 2, Derush to Sivan, pg. 508-9) expands upon this at great length, and also cites the *Lachmei Todah* (p 57, column 3) that the role of Torah study in educating one children can be seen from the verse (Devarim 11:19) "you shall teach them to your children to speak about them" ולמדתם אתם and the word אתם is spelled without the *vav* so that it can also read *vlimadetem atem* "and you should learn yourself!" He explains that a person who himself does not study Torah will have no ability to influence his children to learn, since they will not accept it from him since he does not do so himself. R. Chaim Palagi there explains how Avraham's commitment to and relationship with sincerely seeking Hashem and his Torah are hinted to in this verse - which highlights his ability to teach his children Torah

His [Lot's] wife (Gen. 19:16). According to *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* (ch. 25), her name was Idis. According to Ramban *Peirush ha-Rokeach*, her name was Iris. Others say that her name was Melach (see *Yalkut Reuveni*, in the name of *Sefer Ha-Pliyah* pg. 37a).

And now return the man's wife because he [Avraham] is a prophet (Gen. 20:7). It is strange sounding that the verse says that Sarah should be returned since her husband was a prophet. If Avraham were not a prophet, then Avimelech would he not be obligated to return his wife to him? The Talmud teaches (*Yevamos* 2b) that if somebody marries a woman who turns out to be a *aylonis* (a woman with certain male-like features who cannot have children), then his marriage to her is retroactively nullified, because he did not intend to marry such a woman, and she does not even need a bill of divorce in order to marry somebody else. However, the *Tosafos* write (there) that if at the time of the marriage, the husband knew that she was an *aylonis*, then the marriage cannot be invalidated, and they legally remain husband and wife. Based on this discussion, R. Heschel of Krakow in *Chanukas HaTorah* explains why Hashem stressed to Avimelech that Avraham was a prophet. When Avimelech abducted Sarah, he somehow realized that she was an *aylonis*, and he then wanted to use that revelation to invalidate Avraham's marriage to her and justify himself marrying her, on the grounds that if one finds out that his wife is an *aylonis*, then their marriage is automatically dissolved. To counter this argument, Hashem told Avimelech that Avraham is a prophet, and so at the time that he married Sarah, he already knew she was an *aylonis*, and therefore there were no grounds for an annulment of his marriage to her. Once there were no grounds for such an annulment, Avimelech was obligated to return her to him. Fascinatingly, R. Menachem Recanati (cited by *Midbar Kedemos*, *Maareches Aleph* 9) writes that because Avraham knew that his wife was sterile, he refrained from cohabiting with her until such time that Hashem informed him that he is destined to bear issue through Sarah. At that point, says the

Recanati, he first engaged in relations with her, and she conceived from their first act of intercourse. R. Chaim Palagi (*Nefesh Chaim, Maareches Aleph* 13) similarly writes that as long as Avraham was uncircumcised, he did not engage in marital relations with Sarah, so as not to waste his seed.

...**because he [Avraham] is a prophet (Gen. 20:7)**. Rashbam, a grandson of Rashi, writes that the word “prophet” (*navi*) is related to “fruit of the lips” (*niv sfasaim*). In this statement, Hashem meant to say that Avraham “is accustomed to being ‘with Me’, and he speaks My words, and I love His words, and listen to his prayers.”

And she [Sarah] said to Avraham, ‘banish this maidservant [Hagar] and her son [Yishmael]’ (Gen. 21:10). There is a perplexing Midrash which quotes this passage. When speaking of the *Eishes Chayil* (Woman of Valor), it says in Mishlei “She seeks out (דרשה) wool and linen” which the Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni* to Prov. 964, *Tanchuma Chayei Sarah* 4) says means that she “seeks out” the difference between Yitzchak and Yishmael, and then adduces that explanation from the passage at hand. What’s the meaning of this? R. Chaim Brisker explains that really Avraham was enjoined from appointing Yitzchak as his heir due to the scriptural imperative which says that one cannot appoint as his firstborn heir a younger child, who is the son of a wife that one loves, over an older (actual firstborn), who is the son of a wife that one hates (Deut. 21:16). If this prohibition applied to the case of Yitzchak and Yishmael, then Avraham would have been prohibited from sending Yishmael away. How then did he justify violating this prohibition to actually send him away? God told Avraham, “Everything that Sarah tells you—you must heed her voice” (Gen. 21:12), which created a positive commandment pushing Avraham to send away Ishmael like Sarah said. Now, Avraham had a negative commandment barring him from sending away Ishmael, and a positive commandment telling him to do exactly that. In such a situation, the Talmud (*Yevamos* 4b) rules that a positive commandment supersedes a negative commandment, so one is supposed to fulfill the positive commandment and ignore the negative commandment. For this reason, Avraham ultimately *did* send Ishmael away. The source for this ruling that a positive commandment supersedes a negative commandment is the Halacha that one may wear *tzitzis* out of wool and linen together (even though otherwise mixtures of wool and linen are forbidden from being worn). Accordingly, when the *Eishes Chayil* was said to “seek out” (דרשה) wool and linen, this refers to Sarah seek out the exegetical principle used to justify that which caused Avraham to choose Yitzchak over Ishmael as his heir (see also *Chachmei Lev* vol. 2, *Parshas Veyeira*).

A distance like a bow's shot (Gen. 21:16). Hagar distanced herself from Ishmael because he did not want to see him die, but why did she have to go so far away? R. Ovadiah Bartenura (in *Amar N'keh*) explains that she put twice the distance of an arrow's range between herself and Ishmael. He writes that many people ask why she did so. They answer that because Ishmael was an expert archer, it is possible that his fever would cause him to lose his mind and he would end up shooting an arrow at his mother. For this reason, she made sure to put a significantly larger distance than an arrow could fly between herself and him, so that he might not kill her. See also *HaEmek Davar* who explains that she wanted to cry, so she went far away from him so that he would not hear, because it is especially difficult for a sick person to hear others crying over them, whether or not they are about to die or are expected to recover.

And the God tested Avraham... (Gen. 22:1). Why was *Akedas Yitzchak* considered a test for Avraham, but not a test for Yitzchak? R. Pinchas HaLevi Horowitz writes (*Panim Yafos* here) that Avraham's test was greater than Yitzchak's because by agreeing to sacrifice his son, Avraham would have accepted upon himself an indeterminate amount of pain and suffering, for he would have to live the rest of his life with the grief of knowing that he killed his own son. Interestingly, R. Avraham ben HaRambam cites the classical view of Chazal that Yitzchak was thirty-seven years old at the time of the *Akeidah*, but then mentions his illustrious father's critique. Rambam apparently argued that if Yitzchak was already an adult at the time of the *Akeidah* than it should have been considered *his* ordeal, because as a grown man, he would have had to make the conscious decision to allow himself to be sacrificed. Instead, Rambam seems to understand that Yitzchak was much younger at the time of the *Akeidah*, and it was therefore only his father's decision to make, not his. See also Ibn Ezra (to Gen. 22:3) and *Peirush Ha-Ran* (to Gen. 22:7).

His two lads (Gen. 22:3). Rashi, based on *Bereshis Rabbah*, explains that they were Yishamel and Eliezer. However, R. Zalman Sorotzkin (*Ozneyim LaTorah*) asks that Yishamel was already sent off to the desert before this episode (see Gen. 21:9–21), so why was he still around? One cannot answer using the famous dictum “there is chronological order in the Torah” to say that the stories were not written in chronological order, because in the story of Ishmael's banishment, Sara tells Avraham to send him off, yet at the time of the *Akedas Yitzchok*, Sarah was already deceased. Nonetheless, we can answer that indeed the Torah was not written in chronological order, and Avraham actually banished Ishmael *after* the story of *Akedas Yitzchok*. The fact that Sarah was already deceased at the time of the *Akeidah* is not such a clear-cut fact, but is actually subject to dispute. There is a disagreement over whether Yitzchak was thirty-seven years old at the time of the *Akeidah* or twenty-six years old (see *Biur ha-Gra* to *Seder Olam*, and *Mayim Rabbim* (Frankel), pgs. 119–123). We know that Sarah

A collection of fascinating material on the weekly parsha!

Rabbi Elchanan Shoff

PARSHAS VAYERA

was either ninety or ninety-one years old when Yitzchak was born (see Gen. 17:17), and we also know that Sarah died at the age of one-hundred and twenty-seven (see Gen. 23:1). Accordingly, if the *Akeidah* happened when Yitzchak was thirty-seven years old, then that would make his mother 127/128 years old, by which point she had already died. However, if the *Akeidah* happened when Yitzchak was twenty-six years old, then Sarah was 116/117 years old, and was still alive. If so, we can explain that although elsewhere Rashi accepts the opinion that Yitzchak was thirty-seven years old at the time of the *Akeidah*, here Rashi—for some reason—adopts the understanding that Yitzchak was twenty-six at the time of the *Akeidah*, which means that his mother Sarah lived for another decade afterwards. If this is true, then we can explain that Rashi understood that the story of Sarah telling Avraham to banish Ishmael actually happened *after* the story of the *Akeidah*.

And Avraham said: ‘God will show him the lamb for the burnt-offering, my son’ (Gen. 22:8). R. Yeshaya Horowitz (*Shnei Luchos HaBris, Torah Obr, Vayera*) asks several questions. Firstly, this passage implies that Avraham wanted to bring a lamb, not his son, as a sacrifice. Secondly, it says in the Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni*, 101) on the verse “And he [Avraham] put him [Yitzchak] on the altar” (Gen. 22:9) that Avraham’s eyes were on Yitzchak’s eyes, and Yitzchak’s eyes looked up towards the Heavens, and tears fell from Avraham’s eyes. At that point, he offered a prayer, “I lift up my eyes, to the mountains, from where will my help arrive? My help shall be from Hashem—maker of Heavens and Earth” (Ps. 121:1). This suggests that Avraham did not want to slaughter his son, and indeed his prayer seems to have been fulfilled and he was saved from having to do so.² Could it be possible that Avraham did not gladly wish to fulfill God’s will? We could answer that Avraham was so attached to God, that he synchronized his will with God’s will. Accordingly, Avraham’s test was that he received a command to sacrifice Yitzchak, even though that was not really God’s will. Avraham was then conflicted, because his will—like God’s actual will—was not to slaughter his son, yet he was commanded to do so. The test of the *Akedas Yitzchok* was that now Avraham could be led to think that his own will is not actually synchronized with Hashem’s and that he is so far from truly connecting to God that he came to the exact opposite conclusion than what Hashem wanted from him. At this point, Avraham was at a loss and did not know what to do, so he asked for Divine assistance. That Divine assistance came in the form of Hashem finally revealing to Avraham that He actually did not want Yitzchak slaughtered, and that indeed Avraham’s will and His own will were one. We could also answer that in the end, Yitzchak really was slaughtered in some sort of

² As we say in the *Selichos* prayer and on fast days, “He who answered Avraham at Mount Moriah, He shall answer...” See Talmud Yerushalmi (*Taanis* 2:4). R. Dovid Frankel in *Korban haEdah* explains that Avraham prayed that Isaac not be slaughtered, and his prayers were answered.

A collection of fascinating material on the weekly parsha!

Rabbi Elchanan Shoff

PARSHAS VAYERA

metaphysical way—as the Midrash teaches (see Pirkei Dirabbi Eliezer and what The Netziv writes in *Harchev Davar*). When Avraham prayed that Yitzchak not be slaughtered, he was not trying to go against God’s will, but rather prayed that God’s will be fulfilled in some other way, without actually slaughtering Yitzchak in the physical sense. See also Maharsha (*Taanis* 15b) who writes that Avraham never actually prayed that Yitzchak not be slaughtered (see also R. Michel Stern’s *HaTorah HaTemimah* to Ps. 121:1, pg. 719).

And he said, ‘Avraham, Avraham’ (Gen 22:11). The Midrash (*Midrash Shmuel* ch. 9) notes that there are four different Biblical characters whose names appear twice in succession. The first is “Avraham, Avraham” in our Parshah. The second is “Yaakov, Yaakov” (Gen. 46:2), the third is “Moshe, Moshe” (Ex. 3:4), and the fourth is “Shmuel, Shmuel” (I Sam. 3:9–10). R. Chiya explains that the doubling of their names represents dearness, while R. Eliezer explains that anybody in the Bible whose name is doubled in this way serves as prototype for all generations. In other words, R. Eliezer says: There is no generation which does not have somebody like Avraham, there is no generation which does not have somebody like Yaakov, there is no generation which does not have somebody like Moses, and there is no generation which does not have somebody like Samuel. Indeed, the Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* §74) asserts that there is no generation in which there is nobody who is like Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. In the sefer *Mevaser Tov* (*Chelek Tikkunei Teshuvah ve-Kapparab, Maamar* 7, pg. 89) the Biala Rebbe says that his Rebbe used to add to the thirteen declarations of *Ani Maamin* the declaration, “I believe that in every generation there are righteous people like Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov”. Indeed, he instituted this and mentioned this in the introduction to his sefer *Ohel Yisaschar* based on the Midrashic sources above, and it is published in the *Siddur Chelkas Yehoshua*.

And he [the Angel of God] said: ‘Do not send forth your hand upon the lad, and do not do to him anything, for now I know that you are a Fearer of God, and you did not withhold your son—your only one—from Me’ (Gen. 22:12). R. Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai, the Chida, writes (*Devarim Achadim*, Derush 4 to *Shabbos HaGadol*, p. 12b) that the word “from Me” is ostensibly extra. This is because four verses later Hashem repeats: “By Me, I swore—is the word of Hashem: ‘for because you have done this thing and you did not withhold your son—your only one’...” and in this passage, He does not say “from Me”. Rather, explains the Chida, when Avraham performed this great feat, because of his great holiness and dedication, he was extra careful to make sure that he fulfills this commandment with precise intentions. Avraham strove to accomplish this *Mitzvah* in the most complete way possible. As we know, Chazal tell us that every time a person performs a *Mitzvah*, he creates an angel in the Heavens who will serve as his defender. However, the completion of the angel only mirrors the completion of the *Mitzvah*. If a person performed a *Mitzvah* with

A collection of fascinating material on the weekly parsha!

Rabbi Elchanan Shoff

PARSHAS VAYERA

wrong or bad intentions, then he too creates an angel, but the angel is not complete. The angel which Avraham created by fulfilling God's command in binding Yitzchak was the very same angel who told Avraham "Do not send forth your hand upon the lad..." When that angel said: "for now I know that you are a Fearer of God... from Me", it had first-hand knowledge of Avraham's commitment to God's command, because the angel looked at itself and saw its own completion, which mirrored Avraham's completion in performing the commandment. For this reason, the angel said "from me". The antecedent of "me" in this passage is not God, as if to say Avraham did not withhold Yitzchak "from God", because God is not the speaker, the angel is! Rather, here the angel means to say that "from me"—meaning from the degree of my own completion—I see that you, Avraham, are wholly dedicated to God. The Chida also writes this in *Lev Dovid* (14, 4) and the Vilna Gaon offers a similar understanding in *Kol Eliyahu* (*Vayeira* 18). See also what the Malbim wrote here, and the sefer *Bris Yitzchak* (19) by the brilliant contemporary scholar Rabbi Yaakov Chaim Sofer shlit"a.

And Avraham lifted his eyes and he saw—and behold!—another ram, held in the thicket by its horns (Gen. 22:13). The Chida, writes in *Dvash Le-Fi* (*Maareches Aleph* 16) that the ram which was offered at the Binding of Yitzchak served to atone for the future sin of the Golden Calf, such that the Jewish People would not later be completely destroyed on account of that sin. He finds an allusion to this in the word "thicket" (רִבּוֹס), because the next letter after each letter in that word spells out the word "calf" (עֵגֶל). The commitment to Hashem displayed by Avraham at the Akeida despite the fact that it really made no sense to his way of thinking preempted the damage of the Golden Calf from being irreparable, because the error of the Golden Calf was the Jewish people deciding on their own how to worship God, and deciding that their own system of counting made it clear that Moshe was absent. In fact, had they been more trusting of Hashem and less convinced that their personal feelings about how to worship Hashem were irrelevant, no matter how well intentioned, the sin would never have occurred.

Haftara

And he [her husband] said: 'why are you going to him [Elisha] today—it is not [Rosh] Chodesh, nor is it Shabbos, and she said, 'peace!' (II Kgs. 4:23). According to the Sephardic custom, the *Haftara* ends here! This is quite strange, as this verse is in the middle of the story, for the Prophet had not yet revived the seemingly dead child. Why do they end the *Haftara* here? *Metzudas Dovid* explains that when she said "peace!" she meant to reassure her husband that nothing bad happened that would prompt her to consult with the Prophet. She did not want to tell her husband what really happened, because she figured it would be better if the miracle of her child's resurrection would be less publicized. We see

*Much of the material presented in **Oneg!** has been translated from Rabbi Elchanan Shoff's weekly **Aalefcha Chochma** parsha sheet in Hebrew by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein. To sign up to the **Oneg!** weekly email list, or to sponsor a week of **Oneg!** send an email to BKLAshul@gmail.com*

ONEG!

A collection of fascinating material on the weekly parsha!

Rabbi Elchanan Shoff

PARSHAS VAYERA

from here, that she was **so certain** that Hashem would perform a miracle for her, and she never even flinched in her conviction. Perhaps we can suggest that in a certain way, this is actually the end of the story. Once she had such a strong reliance on Hashem, He was sure to save her son; the fact that the Prophet actually did save her son later on is already tangential.