

## VAYEIRA – 5773

Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

FYI: This parasha has 147 pesukim, and no specific Mitzvot.

The Gemara Shabbat [127a] derives from here, that “*Gedolah Hach’nasat Or’chim Mi’kabbalat Ha’Shechina*” That receiving guests is greater than greeting the Divine She’china. The logic and understanding of this concept is very hard to accept.

In the beginning of the parasha we find HaShem appearing to Avraham. “*VaYeira Eilav HaShem*” [18:1], In the midst of this encounter Avraham receives another call from three men {Angels} and “*VaYar, VaYaratz Lik’ratam* [18:2], [Seeing them, he begs forgiveness from HaShem] and he runs to engage the three guests. That does not sound well. Subsequently, I have found many authoritative and recognized mefareshim that deal with this issue. I will present to you the peshat of the Netziv, [Rav Naftali Tzvi Hirsh Berlin, 1817-1893. son in law of Rav Yitzchak Volozhin, who was the son of R’ Chaim Volozhin].

In parshat Eikev, it is written, “And now, Yisrael, what does HaShem ask of you, merely to have fear of your G-d, to follow all His ways and to love Him, and to serve Him..., to observe the mitzvot...[Devarim 10:12]. The pasuk uses the phrase “*Ki im*” meaning- “merely”. Implying, that the question is minimal, but it then gives a long list of demands. After the long list of demands, “to love, to fear, to observe” and so on, is the “*Ki Im*” appropriate?

The Netziv answers that G-d does not really demand all of these things from every person. The nation of Israel can in general be divided into four groups, namely, Torah scholars, public leaders, business men and women. HaKadosh Baruch Hu, has a different demand from each group. “What G-d demands from one group He does not demand from another one, and it is in fact almost prohibited for any other group. Torah scholars must be deeply involved in the love of G-d. Public officials, who control community finance, must have a fear of G-d. Business men must observe the mitzvot of honesty. A person must establish his goals and his role in life according to his traits and abilities, and he is strictly forbidden from looking aside at another group. A Torah scholar who is successful in his studies must not become a public official, just as a successful army officer should not change direction and choose to move into a spiritual role.

The Gemara Shabbat discusses this [17a]. “The Rabbi of Yavneh said: I, [who am engaged in Torah study] am a creature and my unlearned friend is a creature. My work is in the city and his work is in the field. I arise early to perform my work and he arises early to perform his work. Just as he does not aspire to distinguish himself by doing my work, so I do not aspire to distinguish myself by doing his work. And perhaps you will say that he is correct for not trying to perform my work [studying Torah] because I am able to study extensively, whereas he would be able to study only minimally, that is not so. For we learned that both the one who does much and the one who does little-are equally rewarded, **provided that each direct his heart towards Heaven.**”

“To be a host of guests takes precedence over greeting the Shechina”- **this does not mean that the value of the mitzvah is greater to have contact with the Shechina, but rather that one whose proper task is taking care of guests should not attempt to become involved in spiritual matters, such as greeting the Shechina.**

Some women develop a feeling of having missed something since based on their natural traits they are most deeply involved in matters pertaining to the home and not in Torah study. This is the subject of a question asked by Chazal, [Berachot 17a] “How do women earn their merits”? The answer given is that they enable their husbands to study Torah. But this is still not easy to understand since after all they still miss the observance of this important mitzvah. Concludes the Gemara, that “the promise given to the women was greater than that given to the men”. They can expect a greater reward even if they are not directly involved in the final goal but rather in providing the means to accomplish the goal. One who fulfills his appointed task properly should be very happy even if only involved in the means and not the main task itself.

In Gemara Sukka [51a] we find “Whoever has never seen the Simchat Bet HaSho’eiva celebration has never seen joy in his life” But this is perplexing- for the word “Sho’eiva” means “drawing water from the river”, while the real mitzvah is to pour the water as a libation on the Miz’bei’ach, and drawing the water is just the means to an end! Yet the name of the celebration remains “Sho’eiva”. Chazal wanted to teach us that the means that lead to the mitzvah are to be recognized as significant and important.

Finally, In Gemara Sukkah, the Mishna describes a “great improvement” in the Temple courtyard- a balcony was built for the women. A respectable place was set aside for women, who sit high above the men.