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**Man on a Mission**

**By Rabbi Osher Chaim Levene**



**Rabbi Osher Chaim Levene**

Parshas Vayeira begins with the episode of the three angels coming to visit Avraham Avinu. Rashi explains that there were three angels, one of which had come to inform Sarah that she would have a child, another to turn over Sodom and a third to heal Avraham from his circumcision. Rashi writes that it was imperative that there be three different angels, because it is impossible for an angel to carry out more than one mission.

This idea that one angel cannot perform two missions must be understood. Why is this so? Many people can multitask; why can’t an angel do the same?

We find many interactions with angels throughout Sefer Bereishis, which brings to question what the nature of an angel is, and what our task as humans are and how it differs from an angel.

Rav Yerucham Levovitz zt”l has an insightful explanation as to what an angel’s nature is and how that relates to his mission. For a malach, he as the messenger and his mission are not two independent entities. Rather, he is his mission and what defines him in totality. Therefore, when Hashem gives a malach a certain task, that is what the malach’s entire purpose and essence is about.

**Asking the Angel for His Name**

This is why when Yaakov Avinu fights the angel and Yaakov asks him for his name, the malach responds, “Why do you want to know my name?” The commentaries explain that the angel’s response was that his name is irrelevant in the sense that his identity – or his name – is inextricably tied into his mission. That is all that he is. An angel’s name is nothing more than the expression and directive of his mission. This is reflected in the names of the malachim, which define their essence. In example, Rafael (meaning “G-d is my healer”) speaks to the angel which healed Avraham Avinu and spared Lot from being killed. The malach is identified with what he is meant to do.

Therefore, it’s not that a malach cannot multitask. Rather, his whole life force and what he is created for is his mission, and therefore he cannot have two missions at the same time. Hashem entrusts him with a mission and when he fulfills it, he fulfills the purpose for which he was created.

How does this relate to us as human beings? We too as Jews have a similar outlook in life. The mission with which we are entrusted with is what defines us. The role of the messenger is to do the bidding of the one who sent him. That comprises his identity and essence. And therefore, if Hashem is the one who has sent us, that defines our essence and identity here on this earth, to the point that we can return to Hashem and tell him that we’ve successfully completed our mission.

**Transforming Our Will to Hashem’s Will**

As such, similar to angels, we are to internalize that everything that we are and have is solely and singularly focused and utilized towards our goal and mission. Our will becomes transformed to be the will of Hashem. And given that Hashem’s will and Him are one – the two cannot be separated – by identifying ourselves with our mission, which is the directive and will of Hashem, we are directly connecting and identifying with Hashem Himself.

This, explains Rav Yerucham, is why there is a concept of zerizus, quickness, when it comes to mitzvos. The fact that we are a messenger, the speed in which we perform it reflects our yearning to do the mitzvah. It demonstrates our great desire to connect with Hashem. Angels too, not coincidentally, are described as “running this and that way,” given this very reason – they are wholly focused upon their purpose and their mission and look to carry it out with the greatest speed and no delay.

This is also why our Sages tell us, “Shliach mitzvah eino nizoken,” a messenger on his way to perform a mitzvah will have no harm befall him. Given that one who is in the pursuit of a mitzvah identifies with the messenger Himself – i.e. Hashem – and is thus a direct extension, he is protected by that very virtue of intimate identification and connection.

Our focus on our mission in life can be taken from the mission of a malach. Just as a mission for an angel requires his full concentration, when we reflect on our service of Hashem and purpose in life, it means that we are to invest every fiber of our being in such ways.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Vayeira 5782 edition of the Torahanytime.com Newsletter as compiled and edited by Elan Perchik.*

***And behold, three men were standing over him (Gen. 18:2)***

When the angels visited Abraham, they are referred to in the Torah as "men," but when they appeared before Lot, the Torah refers to them as "angels." Abraham was a very righteous man who excelled in the mitzva of hospitality. No matter who the guest was, Abraham would treat him with great respect. Lot only invited people into his home that he thought were important. He invited the angels to his home because he felt that it would add to his prestige. *(Pardes Yosef)*

*Reprinted from the Parshat Vayeira 5758/1998 edition of L’Chaim.* *Adapted from Vedibarta Bam by Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky*

**Rav Avigdor Miller on Dinosaurs, Cavemen and Climate Change**

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**QUESTION:** **How does the age of the cavemen and the dinosaurs fit in with Torah?**

**ANSWER:** And the answer is, how does the age of the computers fit in with the Torah? Any contradiction? No. Same is just like computers are contemporary with us, so were cavemen contemporary with dinosaurs. Only that today we are contemporary with computers, and yesterday people were contemporary with dinosaurs.

**Footsteps of Dinosaurs and Man Can be Found Together**

The dinosaurs are quite recent. And the fact is, if you want to spend money you can buy a film strip, you can rent it too if you want – I’ll give you the address where it can be procured – and you’ll see there. photographed footsteps, it’s fossilized footsteps, where you see a dinosaur waddling. Its footsteps are imprinted forever on a rock, and together with his footsteps are footsteps of a man.

Human footsteps! Which means that the dinosaur was contemporary with man. Now that doesn’t fit according to the timetables of the evolutionists, but it’s proven, so what can you do?!

Now, the cavemen? There’s no problem there at all. Cavemen, that’s a silly thing. Because there are cavemen even today. In North Africa, even fifty years ago, when Nachum Slouschz was traveling in North Africa, he found Jews living in caves in parts of North Africa. There was a place in the mountains where caves were available and didn’t cost any rent. So, hundreds and hundreds of Jews lived in caves. What does that mean, what does that prove? They’re putting on tefillin in the caves and eating matzah on Pesach in the caves and saying Bereishis bara Elokim in the caves as well. So, a caveman means nothing.

**Dinosaurs are Just the Same as Caveman**

Now dinosaurs, that’s what puts a thrill in little boys who are taught evolution. And therefore, you have to know, dinosaurs are just the same as caveman. Because dinosaurs are a recent phenomenon. They went out of existence as soon as the Mabul took place. A great many of the huge lizards of antiquity that were not able to survive the flood, they were all destroyed in massive catastrophes. And that’s proven by the fact that you find dinosaur graveyards. Huge masses of dinosaur bones are jammed together in certain places as if they were buried together. And that could only be due to catastrophe.

They didn’t come and decide to bury themselves together. It’s not like a Montefiore Cemetery where every person applies for a grave. No! It was a catastrophe that swept them up suddenly. When the Mabul came there were great changes in the weather suddenly. Tremendous changes took place.

**Why the Dinosaurs Disappeared**

When so much water is subtracted from the sea’s surface, there’s a tremendous change in the climate. And in certain places the dinosaurs were immediately overwhelmed. They were frozen.

You find thousands of mastodon skeletons in Siberia. In great cemeteries, great graveyards all buried together. Because there was a big catastrophe that engulfed them suddenly. And therefore, the dinosaurs and the cavemen and whatever else you have are no contradiction to anything that we teach in the Torah.

*Reprinted from the October 28, 2022 email of Toras Avigdor (Tape #490 – January 1984).*

**The Importance of the Test of the**

**Akeida to Jews in All Generations**

**From the Talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



This week's Torah portion, Vayeira, relates the story of the akeida, the Binding of Isaac. G-d said to Abraham, "Please take your son...and offer him there for a burnt offering."

Abraham was tested by G-d ten times throughout his life. The akeida constituted the tenth and final test.

The Talmud explains that G-d's request was an entreaty -- "Please take your son" -- to express His wish that Abraham withstand the trial. "I have tried you many times, and each time you passed the test," G-d said. "Would that you pass this test as well, that people not say the first ones were without substance."

**Why was the Test of the Akeida so Important?**

Why was it so important for Abraham to pass the final test, and how would his failure to do so have invalidated the success of the previous nine? The akeida was certainly the most difficult trial, but even had Abraham not withstood it, why would the previous ones have been considered to be in vain?

Another question: The first test was when Abraham was thrown into the fiery furnace after destroying his father's idols. Wasn't this test just as critical as the tenth one?

The answer is: Sometimes, when a Jew is willing to give up his life for the sake of G-d, it is hard to distinguish if he is doing so solely because G-d wants him to, or because he himself understands that an act of self-sacrifice is required.

**Why Self-Sacrifice Could**

**Be the Logical Conclusion**

For example, the argument could be made that because Abraham understood the necessity of spreading awareness of the one G-d throughout the world, he was willing to allow himself to be burned. In other words, self-sacrifice was a logical conclusion, arrived at by Abraham's own intellect.

The trial of the akeida, however, was entirely different. Withstanding the trial would not result in the public recognition of G-d's Name, as no one else was present except for Abraham and Isaac. On the contrary, G-d's request seemed to defy logic. Abraham wanted his son to continue spreading the belief in G-d after he was gone, yet here G-d was asking him to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering! If Isaac were sacrificed, who would be left to continue his path?

**Acting Out of Love of G-d**

Thus, the akeida constituted a test of Abraham's willingness for self- sacrifice in a situation in which his own intellect led him to the opposite conclusion. His ability to withstand the tenth test thereby demonstrated that the first nine were not in vain, as it proved that he had acted out of love of G-d and not merely because his intellect compelled him to obey.

This contains a lesson for each of us, Abraham's descendents, in how to serve G-d. Rabbi Shneur Zalman writes: "It is good to recite the chapter of the akeida each day...in order to subjugate the [evil] inclination and serve G-d." The power to do so comes to us from Abraham, the first to show us how.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Vayeira 5758/1998 edition of L’Chaim. Adapted from Likutei Sichot, Volume 20.*

**Rabbi Berel Wein on**

**Parshas Vayeira**



Wars, family dysfunction, and the danger of future extinction are the challenges that confront our father Avraham and our mother Sarah in the narrative that dominates this week’s Torah reading. In this era, correcting the past and editing personal biographies to make people’s lives appear perfect, serene and smooth, is especially true. This methodology attempts to make the subject character the model and prototype for others to admire and perhaps even imitate.

Who wants to have a life of troubles, frustrations, domestic strife and risk of destruction – all for the sake of a noble but very unpopular cause? So, why would the Torah not wish to at least “pretty up” the story of Avraham and his family at least by omission if not by commission? Of course, the Torah is the book of absolute truth and therefore brooks none of the human weaknesses that affect all of us when dealing – even in our most objective attempt – with narratives and biographies.

The message here is that truth is the most important value and outweighs all other considerations. The Torah is determined to teach us that life, even for the greatest of people, is oftentimes difficult, disappointing, and sometimes even cruel. And, that faith and commitment, goodness and morality are the supports that justify our very existence, no matter the challenges that constantly engulf human life. We are not bidden to emulate Avraham’s life experiences. Rather, we are bidden to emulate his traits of belief and resilience, commitment and unwavering goodness.

We are taught that G-d’s seal, so to speak, is truth. Truth is the gift that we ask G-d to grant to Yaakov and his descendants. Maimonides explains to us that we are not to serve idols, believe in superstitions and worship the dead, because all of these are false, little more than a pack of lies. And all of that is also applicable to belief in ideologies that have long lost any sense of truth, as to their goals and certainly as to their methods and policies.

Avraham sees that Sodom is to be destroyed because of its falseness. He recognizes that Avimelech cannot be trusted because he is a hypocritically false person. And Avraham reserves the right to serve the cause of G-d’s truth even at the cost, originally, of his own life, and later that of his own beloved son. The Talmud describes our world as being “a world of falseness.” Yet knowing that we inhabit a world of falseness is the first step towards advancing into a world of honesty and truth.

That is what is meant by the biblical admonition to attempt to go in G-d’s ways. To be aware of the difference between falsehood and truth is the necessary ingredient for intelligent life and eternal faith. Avraham’s difficulties in life point us towards the way of realism and truth. It knows no compromises or avoidances. It is eternal.

Shabbat shalom

*Reprinted from this week’s website of rabbiwein.com*

***Behold now I have taken upon myself to speak to the L-rd, although I am but dust and ashes. (Gen. 18:27)***

All people are but dust and ashes, yet they speak to G-d daily when they pray. Abraham was pointing out that, despite the wickedness and corruption of the people of Sodom, Abraham felt enough compassion for them to pray on their behalf. Abraham was saying that if he could feel compassion for those people, then so should G-d, Ruler of the universe, grant them mercy and allow them to live. *(Reb Bunim of P'shischa)*

*Reprinted from the Parshat Vayeira 5758/1998 edition of L’Chaim.* *Adapted from Vedibarta Bam by Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky*

**The History of Lox:**

**An American Dream**

**By**[**Aryeh Genger**](https://aish.com/authors/aryeh-genger)

***The Power of Cultures Coming Together***



Bagels and lox are a classic Jewish pairing. But who thought of the magical combination of smoked salmon and bagels? And how did it become so synonymous with New York Jewry?

**Humble Beginnings**

Bagels and lox for breakfast have practically become a religious ritual in New York, but it didn't start out that way. Despite being one of the most iconic New York foods, Lox was first invented halfway across the world. In the 19th-century, Scandinavian fishermen needed to find creative ways to preserve their catches. Their idea - using saltwater brine to preserve their fish.

You may be wondering, how could the poor Jews in Eastern European shtetls afford expensive smoked salmon? Claudia Roden clears up this misconception in “[The Book of Jewish Food](https://www.amazon.com/Book-Jewish-Food-Odyssey-Samarkand/dp/0394532589/friendsofaishhat)”. She says, "There is no evidence that the Jews of Eastern Europe ate it in the shtetls. The widespread availability and interest in lox did not come about until Eastern European Jews arrived in America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries."

**The American Dream**

The story of how lox made its way to America is even more interesting. The preservation technique the Scandinavian fishermen pioneered made a ton of sense for early 20th century New York City, which wasn’t originally the burgeoning metropolis we're familiar with today. Most homes didn’t have refrigerators, and ice was hard to come by. Since the saltwater brining required for lox minimized the need for refrigeration, which was an essential quality for the Jews in New York during the first big waves of immigration, it became a delicacy.

**Eggs Benedict and Bagels & Lox**

Eggs Benedict was a gimmicky cultural phenomenon in 1930s New York, much like today's cronut or pizza cone. Legend has it that Eggs Benedict got its name from an odd request by a hungover Wall Street broker.

In 1894, in the Waldorf Hotel in New York, Lemuel Benedict ordered two poached eggs on top of buttered toast and crispy bacon with a heaping spoon of hollandaise sauce to top it all off. Oscar Tschirky, the Waldorf’s Head Chef at the time, loved it and made it a staple of his menu.

Similar to how Jews invented the idea of Hanukkah gifts as a way to tame their jealousy of their peers' Christmas gifts, the Jews wanted a piece of the eggs benedict action as well. Their solution was to emulate a Kosher version of the brunch treat. They swapped out the toast for bagels, and then cream cheese and lox replaced the creamy hollandaise sauce and salty bacon, all to make their own makeshift kosher Eggs Benedict.

According to Jewish culinary historian, Gil Marks, this new creation was entirely unique to New York Jews. For example, Jewish communities in Poland had traditionally spread schmaltz on their bagels, or eaten them with cholent or other various soups and treated it as a dinner roll.

By now, bagels and lox have become such an iconic pairing they even have their own [holiday](https://nationaldaycalendar.com/national-bagel-and-lox-day-february-9/) - every year on February 9th!

**Lox vs. Smoked Salmon**

Nowadays, we use Lox and smoked salmon rather interchangeably, but there are huge differences in flavor and texture between the variations.

Lox generally refers to salmon that has been cured in salt, and it’s considered the OG version of preserved salmon. Lox was made from salmon from the Pacific Ocean that was hauled across the country in gigantic salt baths. And, of course, became a favorite of East Coast Jewish immigrants before a morning at synagogue or a long day of work.

Niki Russ Federman, the fourth-generation owner of an acclaimed New York store and restaurant specializing in smoked fish explains: "That the term 'bagel and lox' actually started with belly lox. It's so salty it needed the cream cheese to cut the salinity."

Smoked salmon however is exactly what it sounds like. Smoked salmon is made through a process in which the fish is exposed to smoke for an extended period of time giving it a meaty texture and ashy flavor. Smoked salmon can be prepared using hot smoke or cold smoke, the former giving it a flavor similar to cooked fish, and the latter the more common variation which has a smooth and silky texture and a strong salty taste. Additionally, cold-smoked salmon is usually sliced paper-thin.

While the origins of the respective ingredients may not be native to the states, the classic combination of bagels, lox and cream cheese? That's all American.

Bagels and Lox are the epitome of what New York is all about. New York is the melting pot of the world, where different cultures, cuisines, and cooking methods meet. It's where Jews came once they finally left the old country and dreamed of greener pastures. This American Dream can now be seen in every cross-section of every bagel and lox eaten in the world.

*Reprinted from the November 2, 2022 website of aish.com*

***Suppose ten (righteous men) are found there. (Gen. 18:32)***

Abraham was praying that G-d should not destroy the city of Sodom. Since Abraham lived close to the city, one would assume that he already knew of the existence of any righteous people in Sodom. However, the inhabitants of Sodom were wicked, and would torture anyone caught acting in a kind manner. Thus, any righteous inhabitant of Sodom would have to be very discreet and keep his good deeds hidden. *(Sha'ar Bat Rabim)*

*Reprinted from the Parshat Vayeira 5758/1998 edition of L’Chaim.* *Adapted from Vedibarta Bam by Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky*

**How I Ended Up Marrying My Childhood Friend**

**By [Dassi Berkowitz](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/31094/jewish/Berkowitz-Dassi.htm%22%20%5Co%20%22Browse%20more%20articles%20by%20Berkowitz%2C%20Dassi)**



After I graduated from high school, things didn’t go the way I planned. As a perfectionist, I had a strong vision of how my life would turn out, and it disappointed and frequently frustrated me that so many things didn’t pan out the way I intended.

I started dating for marriage when I was pretty young.

I dated “Yaakov,” someone I really liked. “This is it!” I thought. I already had my future mapped out as I was envisioning the exciting things coming next. This was the happy ending, almost like compensation for everything that hadn’t gone my way in the past year. But ultimately, that didn’t pan out either. My life once again turned, and it was not where I wanted it to go—or so it seemed. I was deeply disappointed; it was so hard.

Over the next few years, a string of challenges came my way. I was suddenly forced to face myself in many areas. See, as a perfectionist, I thought that I had life down pat. Work hard, get good grades, and you’ll do well. But in real life, it was different. As much as I tried, it wasn’t always up to me. The circumstances I faced weren’t things I could control. Like the fact that my college program was canceled or that I couldn’t find the job I wanted. You get the picture.

Looking back, I see that G‑d had a different plan, and it was all perfectly designed.

Over the course of those years, I was dating as well. Most of the men I went out with were clearly not for me. It was frustrating. “All I need is one,” I’d tell people. But in the back of my mind, it was hard to believe that would happen.

A few years later, “Yaakov” (the first guy I had dated) had an idea for me. “Yaakov says you know him,” I was told. “Who do I know?” I asked. But *of course,* I knew Avigdor Schiffman! See, Avigdor was a childhood friend of mine; our moms were good friends, we grew up together, we climbed trees together! We had first met when we were a few months old.

When I was 8, we lost touch, as my family moved to Israel while Avigdor remained in the United States and grew up there. Years later, he ultimately made *aliyah*.

While studying in yeshivah, Avigdor met Yaakov, who worked there as a student mentor. Without knowing we had known each other years ago, Yaakov thought it would be a great idea for me and Avigdor to meet.

Right away, I knew I had to go out with Avigdor, if only to meet him again. It was too fascinating.



A few weeks later, Avigdor and I were engaged. It was a surprisingly smooth process—something that almost didn’t make sense to me since I was so used to things being more difficult. But nothing was random: me dating the first guy years ago, everything else that did or did not work out … [G‑d](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/433240/jewish/God.htm) clearly had this planned out.

Interestingly, the last Purim I spent in the United States as a young child, I “happened” to dress up as a bride. That same year, Avigdor dressed up as a gentleman. Someone snapped the shot of the “bride and groom.” Years later, the picture took on a whole new meaning.

**It’s All About Timing**

Why did no one else think of (re)introducing us? People kept on asking me that. Here’s the thing though: It wouldn’t have worked out a few years back. The many obstacles and challenges that I had to go through shaped me into who I am today. The person I was then is not the person I am now.

Guess what? Avigdor changed as well! If we had met a few years (or even a few months) earlier, it would not have resulted in our marriage. G‑d has our storyline planned to perfection.

My father passed away a few months before I met Avigdor. Aside from the grief of losing a parent, I had been disappointed that my father would never meet my future husband.

But a few years ago, my father was at Yaakov’s wedding, who was part of our community. Avigdor was there as well, and they recognized each other from years before. They schmoozed for quite a while. My father came back home and told my mother how he had met Avigdor and spoken to him at length. He said he was very impressed with him.

To me, this now means the world. My father met Avigdor as an adult and approved of him—something I had thought would be impossible now that my father is no longer with us. Avigdor got to meet my father as well, and they connected. I can’t describe how special my father was, but now Avigdor knows.

See, G‑d arranged that as well. It is all part of a bigger plan. We don’t always see how it will work out in the moment, and sometimes, even years later, we still don’t know. But given this, whenever I now feel that something isn’t going my way or is challenging, I try to anchor into this to restore my faith. Nothing is random; G‑d has a plan for us all.

*Reprinted from this week’s website of Chabad.Org* Dassi Berkowitz is a life coach, empowering women to live a life of opportunity and meaning, while doing what they love and enjoying the process. She lives in Jerusalem with her family and is also the host of the Living Opportunity podcast.