



Parshas Vayera 2021, Expect only of yourself

The Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of my grandfather Yaakov Yosef ben Aryeh Leib, Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia, & Tzvi Ben Yosef. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

The Parsha Perspective in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna, Shaul Ben Berta & Sasson Bezalel Ben Batia.

Our Parsha begins with G-d appearing to Avraham Avinu just after having a circumcision. To ease his pain, G-d made the sun exceptionally hot so there would be no travelers for Avraham to host in his tent. But after seeing how much it bothered Avraham that he had no one to help, G-d sent three angels in the form of men to visit him.

Avraham brought these three travelers to his tent to wash their feet and cool down in the shade. He quickly asked his wife Sarah to make three Matzos for the guests as it was the holiday of Pesach. Avraham then sent his son Ishmael to slaughter three small calves for his guests to eat. Although he just had a circumcision, Avraham attended and cared for each traveler - angel.

One of the angel's jobs was to inform Avraham and Sarah that they would have a son in precisely one year. Sarah, who was listening from the tent, began to laugh, thinking it was physically impossible for her to have a child.

But G-d was not impressed with Sarah; He turned to Avraham and asked why Sarah laughed? (18:14) *“Is there anything too difficult for Me to do? I will return to you at the same time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”*

Therefore, when the baby was born a year later, he was named Yitzchak, which stems from the Hebrew word for laughter.

However, a question comes to mind: The Torah details Avraham's enormous feast for his guests. He slaughtered three separate calves to serve their tongue to each guest. Yet, when Avraham first encounters them, he says (18:4), "*please take a little water and clean your feet.*" Why does the Torah detail that Avraham said, "*take a little water,*" rather than just write, "*please take water*"?

The Radak (*Rav Dovid Kimchi, a biblical commentary from the 11th century*) answers this question by explaining that Avraham was an extremely humble servant of G-d. Hence, he would constantly downplay and minimize his generosity because it was all from G-d. So he said to the angels, "*take a little water,*" to downplay the fact that they are about to have an enormous feast in the middle of the desert.

Furthermore, Avraham's most treasured mitzvah was having guests, as his tent was open on all four sides to invite them in. In fact, the character trait that Avraham passed on to us is the attribute of kindness. So he wanted his guests to have no expectations, for lest he failed to live up to them.

However, Rabbi Yosef Soloveitchik (*a descendant of the Brisker Rabbinic dynasty*) gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He repeats Rashi's explanation as to why Avraham wanted them to wash their feet to begin with.

Rashi quotes the Talmud in Bava Metziah (86b) that Avraham had all his guests wash their feet if they worshiped idols. Since some people actually bowed down to the dust, Avraham made every person clean their feet before entering his tent.

When Avraham said, "*please take a little water,*" Rashi continued that he was not speaking to the angels but to his servants. Meaning that Avraham wanted water to be brought, and then he said to the angels, "*please wash your feet.*"

Rabbi Soloveitchik writes that Avraham asked for only "*a little water*" because his servants brought the water. He did not want to burden them with carrying a significant amount of water so the angels could wash their feet thoroughly.

Since Avraham did not honestly know if the travelers/angels worshipped the dust of their feet. He requested only *“a little amount of water”* to not overwork his servants because of his doubts.

But when it came to his own actions, Avraham went above and beyond the norm to treat his guests with his level of hospitality. He had three calves slaughtered just to each one a whole tongue, which was the best part of the animal at that time.

He gave them matzah straight from the oven with freshly made butter. As the Pasuk details (18:8) *“He took butter, milk and the calf that was prepared and set it before them; and he waited on them under the tree as they ate.”*

Rabbi Soloveitchik learns from Avraham not to presume that others are at the same level of piety as us. We can not expect others to act on our degree of piety and holiness. Rather, we should teach others our outlook and perspective and let them come to their own conclusions.

In our daily life, it is imperative we realize that expecting others to think and act as we do will lead to constant frustration. Every person is going through their own journey with trials and tribulations shaping their views and opinions. This singularity is what makes each of us precious, unique, and irreplaceable.

Most importantly, this change of mentality will stop the cycle of disappointment in others when failing to live up to your expectations. Rekindle your faith in every person's potential to accomplish far beyond your imagination.

***“If you expect great things of yourself and demand little of others,
you’ll keep resentment far away.”***

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*