Vayeira 2017

1.

Humility or circumcision

“Hashem appeared to him (Avraham) in the plains of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day.” (18, 1)

"וירא אליו יקוק באלני ממרא והוא ישב פתח האהל כחם היום."

The Kli Yakar asks why the pasuk doesn’t say that Hashem appeared to Avraham as opposed to “Hashem appeared to him.” Avraham’s name and essence are two polar opposites. Avraham’s name comes from the following pasuk. The pasuk (17, 5) says “And you shall no longer be called Avram, but your name shall be Avraham, for I make you the father of a multitude of nations.” ("ולא יקרא עוד את שמך אברם והיה שמך אברהם כי אב המון גוים נתתיך.") Avraham’s name represents authority in that he is the father of all of the nations. However, his essence is humility. He refers to himself as dirt and ashes (18, 27). This pasuk was purposely phrased this way in order to demonstrate that Hashem doesn’t reveal Himself to leaders. Rather, Hashem reveals Himself to those who are humble. The Gemara in Nedarim (38a) quotes Rabbi Yochanan who said Hashem rests His Divine Presence only upon one who is mighty, wealthy, wise, and humble. And all of these qualities are derived from Moshe. (אמר רבי יוחנן אין הקב"ה משרה שכינתו אלא על גבור ועשיר וחכם ועניו וכולן ממשה) **This (18, 1) pasuk informs us that Hashem only rested His presence upon Avraham because he was humble.**

Another explanation is as follows. Originally Hashem revealed himself to Avraham because he was the father of Aram as stated in Berachos (13a). The Gemara says initially he became a father, a minister, and prominent person only to Aram, so he was called Avram, father (av) of Aram, and ultimately with God’s blessing he became the father of the entire world. So he was called Avraham, father of the masses (av hamon), as it is stated: “I have made you the father of a multitude of nations” (Berashis 17, 5). (בתחלה נעשה אב לארם ולבסוף נעשה אב לכל העולם כולו) The Gemara in Chagiga (3a) says “The princes of the peoples are gathered together, the people of the God of Avraham” (Tehilim 47, 10). The Gemara asks: Is God only “the God of Avraham,” and not the God of Yitzchak and Yaakov? Rather, the pasuk mentions “the God of Avraham,” as he was the first of the converts. (שנאמר (תהלים מז, י) "נדיבי עמים נאספו עם אלהי אברהם" אלהי אברהם ולא אלהי יצחק ויעקב? אלא אלהי אברהם שהיה תחילה לגרים.) Avraham was the first prince, as all converts who follow in his path are called “the princes of the peoples.” Avraham founded monotheism. He created the concept of kiruv. The people that Avraham convinced to convert are considered his children. The Gemara in Yevamos (48b) quotes Rabbi Yosi who says a convert who just converted is like a child just born (in that he retains no connection to his past life). (גר שנתגייר כקטן שנולד דמי).

**Hashem appeared to Avraham only because of his name, not because of his essence. Since he wasn’t circumcised he is considered someone who has a blemish. Once Avraham was circumcised Hashem then appeared and rested His presence on Avraham. Meaning, at this point because of his essence, not just his name Hashem appeared to Avraham. The pasuk therefore states that Hashem appeared to him as opposed to Hashem appeared to Avraham in order to allude to this concept that Hashem appeared to Avraham because of his essence.**

Why did Hashem appear to Avraham specifically in the plains of Mamre? Rashi quotes the Berashis Raba that says Mamre is someone who gave advice to Avraham regarding the mila. Therefore in Mamre’s merit, Hashem revealed himself to Avraham in the plains of Mamre.

Why does the pasuk say "אלוני ממרא" “in the plains of Mamre” in the plural tense? Seemingly Hashem only appeared in one of Mamre’s plains, the one where Avraham was. Why then does the pasuk state that Hashem appeared to Avraham in Mamre’s plains? Since Mamre gave Avraham advice regarding the mila, he therefore had a big merit. Hashem therefore revealed Himself in all of Mamre’s plains.

2.

Modesty

“They said to him, ‘Where is your wife Sarah?’ And he replied, ‘There, in the tent.’ (18, 9)

"וַיֹּאמְר֣וּ אֵׄלָׄ֔יׄוׄ אַיֵּ֖ה שָׂרָ֣ה אִשְׁתֶּ֑ךָ וַיֹּ֖אמֶר הִנֵּ֥ה בָאֹֽהֶל"

Rashi writes the letters 'א' י' ו of the word אליו have dots over them (thus distinguishing these letters which form the word meaning “where is he”?). Rebbi Simeon the son of Eleazar said: wherever you find in a particular word or phrase that the letters in ordinary writing are more numerous than those dotted, you should give a special interpretation to those in ordinary writing. Here the dotted letters are more than those in ordinary writing and you, therefore, give an explanation of the dotted letters. Of Sarah also, they asked, איו “where is he (Abraham)”? So we may learn that in his inn a man should enquire of the man (the host) as to his wife’s welfare and of the woman (the hostess) about her husband’s. The Gemara in Bava Metzia (87a) states the angels knew, indeed, where our mother Sarah was but they asked this question in order to call attention to her modesty and to endear her to her husband more. Rebbi Yosi the son of Chanina stated that they enquired where she was in order to send her the wine-cup of blessing (the glass of wine held by him who benches (recites the grace after meals)).

Avraham had been living with her for a long time; didn’t he know that she was modest? The Kli Yakar explains based on the next pasuk which says “Then one said, ‘I will return to you next year, and your wife Sarah shall have a son!’” Sarah was listening at the entrance of the tent, which was behind him.” Why is “I will return to you next year” in the singular masculine tense? Avraham thought that Sarah might have believed that the reason they didn’t have children was because of Avraham. The angel therefore wanted to fix this misunderstanding by asking where she was. The answer was in the tent, meaning she was modest and the Gemara in Megilah (10) quotes Rabbi Yonason who says any bride who is modest in the house of her father-in-law merits that kings and prophets will emerge from her. (אמר רבי יונתן כל כלה שהיא צנועה בבית חמיה זוכה ויוצאין ממנה מלכים ונביאים) **Thus the angel alluded to the inability for them to have children not being Sarah’s fault.**

**There is another very interesting and different explanation of ‘Where is your wife Sarah?’ There weren’t asking where she physically was, rather they were inquiring about her spiritual state. They were asking how kind she was and if she was performing good acts. In the merit of her modesty, mitzvos such as hachnasas orchim and other acts of kindness they would merit having children.**

3.

Escorting guests

“The men set out from there and looked down toward Sodom, Avraham walking with them to see them off.” (18, 16)

"ויקמו משם האנשים וישקפו על פני סדם ואברהם הלך עמם לשלחם."

The Gemara in Sotah (46b) quotes Rav who says anyone who accompanies his friend four amos (cubits) (six to eight feet) in a city will avoid harm by accompanying him. Ravina accompanied Rava bar Yitzchak four amos in a city. He came close to harm, but he was saved. A teacher accompanies a student until the outskirts of the city; a friend accompanies a friend until the Shabbas boundary of that city, which is two thousand cubits and for a student who accompanies his teacher, there is no measure to the distance he accompanies him. The Gemara asks: And how far? The student is certainly not required to walk with him the entire way. Rav Sheshes says up to a parsa, which is four mil (approximately one mile). This amount applies only with regard to one who is not his main teacher, but he accompanies his main teacher, who taught him most of his knowledge, three parasas. Rav Kahana accompanied Rav Shimi bar Ashi from the town of Pum Nahara to the palm grove in Babylonia etc. Rav Mordekhai accompanied Rav Ashi from the town of Hagronya until Bei Keifei, and some say that he accompanied him until Bei Dura. Rabbi Yochanan quotes Rabbi Meir who said whoever does not accompany another or will not allow himself to be accompanied is like a spiller of blood and is held responsible for any deaths that occur as a result of his inaction. The proof for this is that had the inhabitants of Yerico accompanied Elisha, he would not have incited the bears to attack the children, as it is stated: “And he went up from there to Bethel, and as he was going up by the way, there came forth young lads out of the city and mocked him, and said to him ‘go up, baldhead; go up, baldhead.’” (Malachim II 2, 23). Had the residents of Yerico accompanied him, they would have sent away those youths and prevented what occurred next.

(אמר רב יהודה אמר רב כל המלוה את חבירו ארבע אמות בעיר אינו ניזוק רבינא אלויה לרבא בר יצחק ד' אמות בעיר מטא לידיה היזיקא ואיתציל ת"ר הרב לתלמיד עד עיבורה של עיר חבר לחבר עד תחום שבת תלמיד לרב אין לו שיעור וכמה א"ר ששת עד פרסה ולא אמרן אלא רבו שאינו מובהק אבל רבו מובהק שלשה פרסאות רב כהנא אלויה לרב שימי בר אשי מפום נהרא עד בי ציניתא דבבל כי מטו התם אמר ליה ודאי דאמריתו הני ציניתא דבבל משני אדם הראשון איתנהו א"ל אדכרתן מלתא דאמר רבי יוסי בר' חנינא מאי דכתיב (ירמיהו ב, ו) בארץ לא עבר בה איש ולא ישב אדם שם וכי מאחר שלא עבר היכן ישב (ומאחר שלא ישב היכן עבר) אלא ארץ שגזר עליה אדם הראשון לישוב נתישבה ארץ שלא גזר עליה אדם הראשון לא נתישבה רב מרדכי אלויה לרב אשי מהגרוניא ועד בי כיפי ואמרי לה עד בי דורא אמר רבי יוחנן משום רבי מאיר כל שאינו מלוה ומתלוה כאילו שופך דמים שאילמלי ליווהו אנשי יריחו לאלישע לא גירה דובים לתינוקות שנאמר (מלכים ב ב, כג) ויעל משם בית אל והוא עלה בדרך ונערים קטנים יצאו מן העיר ויתקלסו בו ויאמרו לו עלה קרח עלה קרח אמרו לו עלה שהקרחת עלינו את המקום)

**Rashi comments that if guests are escorted then they will be damaged. The Marsha explains that it is not enough to merely escort one’s guest. Rather, the host must show the guest the proper direction to go. Rabbi Simcha Zissel Ziv of Kelm (the Alter of Kelm) offers a unique physiological reason why hosts must escort their guests. Many guests tend to view themselves as a burden to their host and that they are inconveniencing their host by having to host them. Some tend to feel like their host wants them to leave. This feeling is tantamount to murder. (It seems like since the Gemara says that one who embarrasses someone is considered as if he killed him, thus when this guests is embarrassed because his host let of vibes off troublesomeness, it is considered as if this host killed him. Chazal therefore commanded hosts to escort their guests in order to remove this terrible potential thought process from the minds of guests. Meaning, the host escorting his guest demonstrates that he wants to spend more time with his guest and that it was a pleasure and merit to host him. This escorting demonstrates that this host was happy to host him and on the contrary he is pained by his departure. (Chayai Moshe (chelek daled page 456.))**

The Zohar (page 104b) quotes Rebbi Eliezer who says that Avraham knew that his guests were angels and he still escorted them. He did so because there is an obligation to escort guests, even if they are angels, period. Everything is dependent on guests being escorted. The Masok Medevash explains that **the fulfillment of the entire mitzvah of hachnasas orchim is dependent on escorting them because this is the completion of the mitzvah.** Meaning, a mitzvah is only considered fulfilled if it was completed. The Zohar explains that when Avraham escorted them Hashem decided to completely reveal Himself to Avraham and divulge all of His secrets as the pasuk states “Now Hashem had said, ‘shall I hide from Avraham what I am about to do?’” "וה' אמר המכסה אני מאברהם אשר אני עושה." (18, 17) **When a host escorts his guest this host causes Hashem’s presence to dwell on this guest. The guest is consequently protected from potential bad that can occur while he travels.**

**The Rambam (hilchos avel 14, 1-3) says that one must escort a guest out of his home**. He writes that the reward for escorting a stranger is greater than any reward. It is a practice introduced by our father Avraham, a way of kindness which was habitual with him. He served food and drink to wayfarers and escorted them. Hospitality to wayfarers is greater than welcoming the Divine Presence, as it is written: “He saw three men … he ran to meet them” (Berashis 18, 2) (Shabbos 127). Escorting them is even greater than receiving them. The Gemara says anyone who does not escort his guests is considered as if he murdered them (Sotah 46b). Local residents are compelled to provide escorts for wayfarers like they are compelled to contribute to charity. The court used to provide agents to escort any person who would pass from one locality to another. Those who shirked this duty were regarded as if they shed blood (because of the dangerous roads). Even if one accompanies another the distance of amos cubits, he will be amply rewarded.

Why aren’t some people careful with this nowadays? Nowhere in the four sections of Shulchan Aruch will you find any laws on hachnasas orchim! **The Darchei Moshe (Choshen Mishpat 427) wonders why people aren’t careful to escort their guests. He explains that it is because the person being escorted is mochel (foregoes his honor of being escorted). However, he says that you need to minimally escort him four amos (six-eight feet) outside of the house.**

Another reason why people are lenient with this is as follows. **The Aruch Hashulchan** (Choshen Mishpat siman 426 os 2) **leniently says that if the guests aren’t traveling by foot then they don’t need to be escorted.**

**Additionally, if two or more guests are walking out together, the host does not need to escort them because it is as if they are escorting each other.**

The Chafetz Chaim (Ahavas chesed chalek gimal, perek beis 2) explains that **if the guest doesn’t know where he is going then there is a big mitzvah to walk with him to show him which way to go, or to minimally show him which way to go.** It is not so simple to rely on the Rema’s leniency because it is not so simple that a guest has the halachic ability to be mochel on being escorted. Since the previously mentioned Gemara says that a host who doesn’t escort is considered as if he murdered, therefore it’s obviously preferable not to rely on a questionable loophole to get out of escorting. (The question is why wasn’t the Rema concerned about this Gemara? Seemingly the Rema holds that the reason of mechila is a full-fledged exemption.) The pasuk (21, 33) states “Avraham planted a tamarisk (אשל) at Beer-sheba, and invoked there the name of the Hashem, the Everlasting God.” ("ויטע אשל בבאר שבע ויקרא שם בשם יקוק אל עולם.") The word אשל stands for eating (אכילה), drinking (שתיה) and escorting (לויה). A good host serves his guests food, and drinks and escorts them.

Once, one of the wealthiest Jews of Vilna, a man renowned for his hospitality to guests, lost both his house and virtually all his wealth in a fire. Why didn’t the merit of his hospitality protect him? Although he generously provided his guests with food and drink, he had failed to personally accompany them on their way. Since he didn’t escort them, therefore all he was left with was אש in the word אשל. (This story is also related in the Vilna Goan page 151.) We find a similar idea by marriage. **The Gemara in mesechas Sota (17a) relates that if a man (איש) and a woman (אשה) are worthy, Hashem’s Divine presence is between them. Rashi explains that the words איש and אשה are almost identical; the difference between them is the middle letter י in איש, and the final letter ה in אשה. These two letters can be joined to form the name of God spelled יה. But if due to licentiousness they do not merit reward, the Divine Presence departs, leaving in each word only the letters א and ש, which spell אש, fire. Therefore, fire consumes them.** (דריש רבי עקיבא איש ואשה, זכו שכינה ביניהן, לא זכו אש אוכלתן. רש"י כתב, שהרי חלק את שמו ושיכנו ביניהן יו"ד באיש וה"י באשה. לא זכו אש אוכלתן שהקב"ה מסלק שמו מביניהן ונמצאו אש ואש.)

**The Chayai Moshe (chelek daled page 457) quotes the Samak who explains that if the host doesn’t escort then he can also be damaged. (This is clearly demonstrated from the previous story.) If a guest wasn’t escorted then he should learn in order to stay protected.** The Gemara in Eruvin (54a) quotes Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi who says one who is walking along the way without a companion and is afraid should engage in Torah study, as it is stated with regard to the words of Torah: “For they shall be a graceful wreath (livyas chen) for your head, and chains about your neck” (Mishlay 1, 9). The word livyas is understood here as a reference to levaya, accompaniment. Thus the explanation of this pasuk is interpreted to mean that Torah is a graceful accompaniment to one who is traveling. (אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי המהלך בדרך ואין עמו לוייה יעסוק בתורה, שנאמר "כי לוית חן הם.")

This shtims with what we said in parshas Vayigash. “And he sent off his brothers, and they went. He said to them, ‘do not become agitated on the way.’” (45, 24)

"וישלח את אחיו וילכו ויאמר אלהם אל תרגזו בדרך." The Nachlas Tzvi (page 111) asks **this pasuk is seemingly redundant; once the pasuk related that Yosef sent his brothers, why does the pasuk subsequently need to specify again that they went?**

The word ‘וישלח’ doesn’t solely mean to send. A proof of this point is derived from the pasuk about Avraham that states “Avraham walked with them to escort them.” ("ואברהם הלך עמם לשלחם.") (Berashis 18, 16) Rashi comments that Avraham went to escort the angels. Here as well, **Yosef didn’t just merely send them off; rather he escorted them.**

Why did Yosef tell his brothers not to get agitated on the way? Rashi explains based on the Gemara in Taanis (10) that Yosef instructed them not to learn on the way.

The obvious question is, why not? Furthermore, why didn’t Yaakov tell them this when they traveled to Egypt?

**Since Yosef escorted them, they already had protection from this merit, and therefore didn’t need the merit of protection from learning.** However, since Yaakov didn’t escort them, they therefore needed the learning in order to protect them on their journey. (The question still arises; why would they need either the merit from learning or escorting? Since the brothers were already performing the mitzvah of כיבוד אב (respecting their father), they therefore should have been protected on their journey because of that merit? It could be that since they sold Yosef they needed extra protection. (Answered by Dr. Joney Newman)) In a regular case, either or, is needed to protect guests with their travels. Either the host escorting them, or them learning Torah as they travel, will be independently adequate.

The Ein Yaakov (Sota 46b) quotes the Beer Sheva who attempts to explain why the halachos of escorting aren’t mentioned in the Tor and Shulchan Aruch. Nowadays there are many dangerous places. Thus, hosts aren’t obligated to endanger themselves to escort their guests. Our lives come before those of others (חייך קודמים). The question on this explanation is hosts should still escort their guests minimally four amos. This small distance will certainly not be dangerous. Furthermore, this is difficult to rely on nowadays when we b”H live in a time when it isn’t dangerous to walk outside. Ein Yaakov therefore says that the main purpose of escorting is to show them the way. Since our roads are marked and it is relatively easy to figure out where one is going, hosts are only obligated to escort their guests four amos.

The Betzeil Hachachma (chelek daled siman 34 11-13) says that **the main mitzvah is to escort one guest. However, one will still fulfill a mitzvah if he walks out several guests at once. If someone has to choose whether to escort one guest or two or more guests, for example if they are heading in different directions, then he should escort one guest.** The reason for this was already mentioned above. **The multiple guests are considered to escort each other unlike the one guest.** **When the host is escorting his guest out, he should walk his guest all the way to their car.**

In conclusion, we clearly see the importance of hachnasas orchim. We also learnt about the importance of the aspect of escorting. **There are several leniencies that have been offered which wouldn’t obligate a host to escort his guests. However, one should preferably escort his guest. Especially considering the possibility that by not doing so it could be tantamount to murder, one should certainly escort his guest.**