Vayeira 2013

Importance of hachnasas orchim

Nachalas Tzvi daf 35

18, 3 “And he said (Avraham), My Lord, if I find favor in Your eyes, please don’t pass away from Your servant.” “ויאמר אדני אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך אל נא תעבור מעל עבדיך.”

Gemara in Shabbos 127 says this pusuk is referring to Avraham telling Hashem please wait for me while I greet the guests who were really angels. The Gemara deduces and concludes from this pusuk that hachnasas orchim (greeting and taking care of guests) is even greater then receiving the divine presence of Hashem. The question on this Gemara is; where did Avraham learn this from that it is permissible to leave Hashem in order to greet guests? What was Avraham thinking? The Nachalas Tzvi answers Avraham knew this concept based on logic. The pusuk in Tehilim says 109, 31 “Hashem stands to the right of a poor person” ".כי יעמוד לימין אביון" We see from this pusuk that Hashem is around poor people. **When a person does hachnasas orchim simultaneously he is receiving the divine presence of Hashem. Therefore Avraham realized that when a person does hachnasas orchim there are two mitzvos are actually being performed: a) the actual act of hachnasas orchim and b) he is receiving the divine presence of Hashem. This is not the case when a person is receiving the divine presence of Hashem, he has only one mitzvah. When Avraham said to Hashem “please don’t pass away from Your servant.” It was only for a few seconds that Avraham wasn’t receiving the divine presence of Hashem until Avraham performed hachnasas orchim.**

2) Mila in public

18, 1 “Hashem appeared to him (Avraham) in the plains of Mamre while he was sitting etc.” "וַיֵּרָ֤א אֵלָיו֙ יְקֹוָ֔ק בְּאֵלֹנֵ֖י מַמְרֵ֑א וְה֛וּא יֹשֵׁ֥ב פֶּֽתַח־הָאֹ֖הֶל כְּחֹ֥ם הַיּֽוֹם."

Why did Hashem appear to Avraham specifically in the plains of Mamre? Rash”i quotes the Berashis Raba that says Mamre is someone who gave advice to Avraham regarding the mila, therefore due to the merit of Mamre, Hashem revealed himself to Avaraham in the plains of Mamre. The big question on this Berashis Raba is what kind of advice did Avraham ask Mamre? Did Avraham really ask Mamre ‘should I listen to God who commanded me to perform mila or should I not listen to God?’ Of course Avraham was going to do that which Hashem commanded him to do. If this is so what was the advice that Avraham asked Mamre? There are many answers to this fundamental question. One of them is brought by the Sifsay chachamim who explains the whole question that Avraham was doubtful about was should I perform the mila in public in front of everyone or private. Avraham was afraid maybe they will not allow me to perform the mila and they will physically stop me. On this Mamre answered Avraham do the mila in public. The Das Zikanim also has this approach that Mamre’s advice to Avraham was to perform the mila in public. In addition the Das Zikanim elaborates that Mamre wanted Avraham to perform the mila in public in order that others would follow and they themselves will perform mila. This is the explanation of the pusuk “The mila was performed on that very day” (17, 23) meaning it was performed in front of many people. Another idea of what occurred is Avraham was thinking maybe they will make fun of me and say ‘what is this weirdo doing? Why is he cutting himself? Why is he inflicting pain upon his children?’ Therefore Avraham thought maybe it’s better if the mila is performed in private in order that people will not make fun of me. On this **Mamre said perform the mila in public because we will respect you and your religion more if you practice it in public and in front of us and you are not ashamed of it.** The safer Tuvcha Yabeyu (Rabbi Yitzchok Zilberstein) on page 100 brings a story of someone who was going to take a bal teshuva to see chalitza. The question was should this be done or not because it might turn the bal teshuva off from Judaism and the loss would be greater than the gain? Rabbi Yitzchok Zilberstein answers that the mitzvah will have a positive influence on those who witness it and in the end these will respect the mitzvah and realize the importance of it. For sure you should take him to see the chalitza! We must be proud of our religion and when around none Jews still say brachos with cavana. If we need to put tefilin on in a public area such as a plane we should do so with happiness and excitement and not be ashamed.