

Parsha Encounters

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23 Cheshvan 5766/Nov. 25, 2005

Parshas Chayei Sarah - Rabbi Meir Stern

“Shocked”

“Lispod I'Sarah V'livcosah — To Eulogize Sarah and cry over her” (23,2)

Rashi explains the connection between the death of Sarah and Akeidas Yitzchak. The Medrash says that the Angel of Death told Sarah that her son Yitzchak was brought as a korban. The shock was too much for her to bear, her Neshama left her and she died before the Angel was able to tell her Yitzchak was ultimately saved by the Angel from Heaven who told Avrohom, “do not touch the child”.

We must clarify the difference between Sarah and Avraham. Why is it that Avraham was able to receive the command to slaughter his son with equanimity and execute it without any apparent difficulty, yet Sarah who was greater than Avraham in prophecy was unable to handle hearing about the *Akeidah* and even died as result.

In last week's Parshah, Hashem commanded Avraham “Please take your son, your special one, whom you love, Yitzchak, and go to the land of Moriah, and bring him up for an Olah”. Rashi there asks why did Hashem not reveal what he wanted right away, why was the commandment so drawn out. Rashi answers in order not to confuse him suddenly, and disorient him, causing him to lose his mind.

R' Chaim Shmuelevitz zt"l elaborates that had Avraham been confronted suddenly with the order to kill his own son he would not have survived. He was capable of passing the *Nisayon*, test, only be-

cause Hashem commanded him in a roundabout manner. He came to the realization of what Hashem wanted gradually, which gave him time to acclimate to the idea and no harm was done. Sarah was not given the chance to adapt to the situation thrown at her; she was therefore overwhelmed by shock, which she did not survive.

Over the generations we have seen how vital the ability to adapt is, and how without it we could not have overcome the difficult trials and tribulations we were forced to undergo. However, there is a negative aspect in adaptability and, conversely, a positive aspect in retaining the original shock. We are Bnei Melochim the children of Avrohom, Yitzchak and Yaakov, and are accustomed to behavior befitting our elevated stature. We must try to retain our shock towards improper behavior and not allow our senses to become dulled by the outside world, in a society where the forbidden has become the norm. Rather, let us be a beacon of light illuminating humanity so that the world will know that the land and everything on it are from Hashem.

Rabbi Stern learns regularly at the Kollel.

דיין בא - לעיר

DAYAN AARON DUNNER, shlita

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SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2005

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Halacha Encounters

Haftorah

Rabbi Ari Friedman

The reading of the Haftorah on Shabbos morning is a practice that has been with us for millennia. Sometimes it is noted with great reverence, as on Shabbos Nachamu and Shabbos Shuva, while at times it is hardly noticed. (Can you remember what last week's haftorah was?) Let us explore this subject and its laws and hopefully gain a deeper appreciation for this old custom.

Origin

The reading of the haftorah began when the oppressors of the Jews (some say it was the Greeks (Tosfos Yom Tov Megillah 3-4)) forbade the regular reading of the Torah. Not accepting defeat, the Jews substituted with the reading of a portion of the Neviem which related to the parshas hashavua. Later, this practice became routine even after the ban on Torah reading was lifted (Bach 284). Rav Hirsch writes that this custom of reading the haftorah immediately following krias hatorah serves as a message that the prophesies of the neviem who followed Moshe were all completely rooted in the Torah and aimed at guiding us in keeping the Torah. They are not chas v'shalom separate entities. The word "haftorah" is associated with the word "niftar" or "patur" meaning taking leave or finishing for it is with this that we conclude the service of Shacharis.

The oleh

The haftorah actually begins with the aliyah of maftir. As mentioned earlier, this stresses the prominence of the torah vis-à-vis the navi (Bach). The maftir then proceeds to make the beracha on the haftorah. A minimum of twenty-one pesukim are read followed by another four berachos. In total, the maftir recites seven berachos which together with the twenty-one pesukim of the haftorah form a mini krias hatorah. The seven berachos

correspond with the seven aliyos, and the twenty one pasukim correspond with the required minimum of three pesukim per each of the seven aliyos (ibid). While the berachos are being recited, one should sit quietly and pay attention to the berachos (Shulchan Orech 284-3 this also serves as a way of completing a hundred berachos). The common practice is to accord a bar mitzvah boy, and a chasan at his aufrauf the aliyah of maftir. This is a rather curious custom since a child may receive this aliyah as well. Nevertheless, this is certainly the minhag.

Sefer or Scroll

Ideally, individual Navi scrolls should be used for the haftorah. Chazal however realized that these could be difficult and expensive to obtain and permitted the use of a single scroll which contained a collection of all the selected portions of navi necessary for the haftorahs (Gitten 60A). The Taz (284-2) writes that in light of the above leniency, reading from a printed book would be acceptable as well. The Magen Avraham (284-1) adds that it is even preferred since in this manner a complete book is easily obtainable. Many poskim take issue with the above opinions, arguing that printed books can in no way be comparable to handwritten scrolls, especially in modern times when virtually no manual labor is involved in printing books. The poskim therefore encourage an effort to obtain authentic scrolls. If this is not practical, a complete navi should be used and if that is unavailable then a chumash may be used (see Yechave Daas 5-26 and Mishna Berurah 284-1).

What the haftorah is read from actually effects the participation of the congregation as well. When a scroll is used the tzibbur should sit quietly and listen. When a printed book is used the tzibbur should ideally read along with the baal koreh (Eshai Yisroel).

Rabbi Friedman learns full-time at the Kollel.