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# בשבת



אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

PARSHAS  
VAYEIRA

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT  
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS  
RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN

## CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN

Towards the end of this week's *Parshah*, we find the dramatic story of *Akeidas Yitzchak*, where Hashem told Avraham to sacrifice his beloved son. In introducing this narrative, the Torah says, "הֲאֵלֶּקִים נִסָּה אֶת אַבְרָהָם" that Hashem tested Avraham.<sup>1</sup> Tests are usually given in order for the teacher to find out how well the students know the material, or to motivate the students into studying the material. Both of those reasons don't seem to apply here - Hashem already knows how well Avraham will do, and there isn't anything for Avraham to 'study.' What, then, was the purpose of this test?

The Seforno<sup>2</sup> (Reb Ovadiah ben Yaakov, 1475-1550) explains that our purpose in this world is to be as similar to Hashem as possible. We do this by following in His ways, and observing the *Mitzvos*. The more one adapts their conduct to Hashem's commandments, the more G-dly they become. Therefore, the purpose of a 'test' isn't to find out how well someone will do, or to get them to 'study,' rather, it's to turn their good thoughts into action. To *make* them into better people. If Hashem would not test Avraham, Avraham would remain stagnant - full of potential, but never actually growing into the person that he could one day become.

In our own lives we are sometimes faced with considerable challenges. And besides the large obstacles in our path, our days may be filled with small frustrations; losing our keys, missing the bus, or not being able to find our homework. Each one of these instances are challenges, and opportunities. We have a choice - we can use these situations to grow, to grow in our patience, our maturity, and our kindness, or we can use these situations to diminish ourselves, to become smaller people, meaner, and selfish.

When we realize that the bumps in our lives are for our own good, we can use them to catapult us into becoming a person we never thought we'd become.

**"We can use these situations to grow, to grow in our patience, our maturity, and our kindness..."**

### Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Knowing that the annoyances of life are stepping stones is one thing - but how do we put that knowledge into action?

The first step is to truly recognize the nature of our daily frustrations. These are perfectly designed to help us, whether it's for us to work on our anger, humility, or gratitude. It takes work to really feel this way, and it might be a good idea to look back on previous areas of growth for inspiration. All of our skills took work. Learning to walk, to speak, to write took months if not years of practice. It may have been difficult at the time, but now we have a skill for life.

In combination with this, it might be a good idea to set a reminder - on our phone, or our watch - for every hour or two. We can use this reminder to put ourselves into a mindset; whatever happens in the next hour or two, I'm going to use as exercise, building my spiritual muscles. Therefore, when something doesn't go our way, instead of getting upset, we can calmly smile and acknowledge how this is pushing us in the right direction.

Using these two practices together can really help us be as 'similar to Hashem' as we can.

1 Bereishis 22:1

2 *ibid* s.v. ניסה

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**Caution is certainly needed to avoid negative commandments during one's lifetime. The true goal of life, though, is to pursue Shleimos! To positively amass Torah and Mitzvos and develop G-dly character as much as possible.**

- R Avigdor Miller Shaarei Orah Vol 1, p. 7

# A PARENT'S PATIENCE

Mr. Eliyahu Cooper\* and his son Yaakov were sitting together, reminiscing about old neighbours who had moved away. "Remember Rabbi Kessler?" said Yaakov. "I remember eating in his house Friday night; he sang songs throughout the entire meal. I also remember he would call me 'Yanke'le.' He was the only one who called me that. Where did he go once he moved away?"

"He opened up a *Shul* in Cedar Bluff," responded Mr. Cooper. He's actually become a well-known speaker, and a lot of people ask his advice, especially in the area of *Middos*. That reminds me... I'll tell you something that happened many years ago. I was sitting in Rabbi Kessler's house, when his daughter, Rina, came in. I don't know if you remember Rina, but she was a handful - she was always on the move, always had something to do. She was about four years old at the time, and I remember that Rabbi Kessler said something like this. 'Rina, please don't climb on the table. Rina, please come off of the table. Please don't take the pencil. Rina, please put the pencil back. Rina, please throw the pencil pieces into the garbage,' and so on."

Yaakov smiled. "I remember he was very patient, but that's a lot of patience!" "The story's not over," said Mr. Cooper. "I asked Rabbi Kessler why he wasn't more forceful. If I recall correctly, I said, 'Look, just raise your voice, and she'll stop in her tracks. Why are you letting her get away with this?'"

"He said to me, 'It's true, if I get angry, it'll change her behavior. But the problem is, it'll also change my behavior. I'm not willing to become that sort of person.'"

Yaakov looked at his father in the silence that followed the story. Remembering his own childhood, he asked, "Tatty, is it true? Does getting angry at your kids make you an angrier person?"

The answer was immediate. "Yes, without a doubt. The way we act, to whomever it may be, makes an impact on us. It works both ways - it can make a person irritable, or it can make a person compassionate. And I've seen both."

*\*Names have been changed, based on a true story.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Though difficulties can bolster our self-growth, we should not voluntarily bring them on ourselves.<sup>1</sup>
- Suffering in this world alleviates suffering for sins in the next world (which would be much worse).<sup>2</sup> Included in this is the aging process, as requested by Yitzchak Avinu.<sup>3</sup>
- The way a righteous person becomes a righteous person is through effort, and failure!<sup>4</sup>
- If a person skips steps and rushes their spiritual growth, they will not be successful.<sup>5</sup>

1 *Sanhedrin* 107a

2 *Mishna Berurah* 222:4

3 *ibid.*

4 *Iggeres Pachad Yitzchak*, Letter 128

5 *U'Vo Sidbak on Mesillas Yesharim*, Introduction, Note 82