



The Pardes Parsha Discussion by Rabbi Alex Israel

Vayera: Don't Curb your Enthusiasm

Abraham sees three travellers passing by his tent and:

As soon as he saw them, **he ran** from the entrance of the tent to greet them... Abraham **rushed** into the tent to Sarah, and said, "**Quick**, three *seah* of choice flour! Knead and make cakes!" Then Abraham **ran** to the herd, took a calf, tender and choice and gave it to a servant-boy, who **hastened** to prepare it.

One thing that strikes me as I read this depiction is the speed at which Abraham is moving. There is not a second to waste! One might explain that Abraham knows that these travelers are stopping for a midday siesta and they want to continue with their day's travel, so he has a limited timeframe in which to work; that is certainly true. And yet the energy and gusto he exhibits is extraordinary.

Abraham exhibits a heightened degree of motivation and energy to get things done; even acts that he is loath to perform:

After the prayer for Sedom:

Abraham arose early the next morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord, and, looking down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and all the land of the Plain, he saw the smoke of the land rising like the smoke of a kiln. (19:27-8)

Sending away Yishmael:

Abraham arose early the next morning, took some bread and a skin of water, and gave them to Hagar... and sent her away. (21:14)

The Akeida:

Abraham arose early the next morning, saddled his ass ...and he set out for the place of which God had told him (22:2)

The Talmud recommends performance of mitzvot as early in the day as possible, because: The vigilant hasten performance of mitzvot, as it is stated: “And Abraham arose early in the morning.” (Pesachim 4a)

So let's discuss:

- What is it about Abraham that gives him this energy, this enthusiasm?
- Is there something about hospitality and welcoming guests that particularly lends itself to this trait?
- Why did Abraham set out first thing in the morning when he went to check on Sodom (after he prayed for it to be saved), when he sent away Hagar and his beloved Yishmael and also when he set out for the Akeida?

My boss once told me once. “If you have something unpleasant to do in your daily agenda, do it as your first ‘to-do’ item in the morning. That way you won’t procrastinate all day.” Is that what is happening here?

The first line of the *Shulchan Arukh*, the classic code of Jewish law, is this:

One should rise in the morning like a lion to the service of his Creator, blessed be He, because for this he was created, and for this purpose he returns his soul to him. Even if one’s [evil] inclination should tempt him by saying, “You have not yet had your fill of sleep,” he should overcome it and rise...

Contrast this with Simon and Garfunkel’s *59th St. Bridge Song*”

Slow down, you move too fast
You got to make the morning last
Just kicking down the cobblestones
Looking for fun and feelin’ groovy

... I got no deeds to do
No promises to keep
I’m dappled and drowsy and ready to sleep
Let the morning time drop all its petals on me
Life, I love you
All is groovy

Can you contrast what is driving the *Shulchan Arukh* in contrast to Simon and Garfunkel?

The trait we are discussing here is that of Zerizut or Enthusiasm. Alan Morinis in his superb book, *Everyday Holiness* writes the following:

The lesson for us is that merely showing up in life just isn’t enough. Drifting along with no passion for living, or repeating the same good acts in a routine way is a kind of sin. Your acts are contaminated.

How does this manifest itself?

- As parents with our children (and distracted by our smart phones)?
- In the workplace, as employers and employees?
- In our Judaism?

Don't curb your enthusiasm, just like Abraham!

Shabbat Shalom!