

11-08-25 Message to Roeh Israel Abilene – *Vayera* (and [Adonai] appeared)
Torah Portion: Genesis 18:1 – 22:24
Haftarah: 2 Kings 4:1-37
Suggested Acheron K'tuvim: Hebrews 13:1-3

Hospitality and Generosity

Central question: Are you being a blessing, and then receiving a blessing?

We are this week in the fourth parasha of the Torah. Its name comes from the first word in English, and the first word in the original Hebrew, as well.

Gen 18:1-3

18 Now the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre,
while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day. 2
And when he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men
were standing opposite him; and when he saw them, he ran
from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the
earth, 3 and said, "My lord, if now I have found favor in your
sight, please do not pass your servant by.

18:1

וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו יְהוָה בְּאֵלֶיךָ מִמְרָא וְהָיָא יֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח־ הָאֹהֶל
 And appeared unto him the Lord in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in door the tent
7200 413 3068 436 4471 1931 3427 6607 168

בְּחֶם הַיּוֹם:
 in the heat of the day;
2527 3117

וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אָנָשִׁים נֹצְבִים עָלָיו וַיֵּרָא
 And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: when he saw
5375 5869 7200 2009 7969 376 5324 5921 7200

וַיָּרֶץ לִקְרָאתָם מִפֶּתַח הָאֹהֶל וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אֶרְצָה:
 and he ran to meet them from door, the tent and bowed himself toward the ground,
7323 7125 6607 168 7812 776

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי אִם־נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֵל־נָא תַּעֲבֹר
 And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, not I pray thee, pass away,
559 113 518 4994 4672 2580 5869 408 4994 5674

מֵעַל עַבְדְּךָ:
 thy servant: from
5921 5650

As this parasha opens, Abram is seated at the Oaks of Mamre, and three figures suddenly appear before him not far from his tent. The only identifier associated with these figures is the four-letter Name.

The passage makes it clear that G-d (identified by the Holy 4-letter Name) was the one who appeared. I do find some discussion among the Sages that the Holy One did appear in some fashion to Abraham, but I have not yet seen any who actually identifies one of these beings with Messiah.

What convinces me that one of these beings was indeed a preincarnate Messiah is a combination of several factors.

1. This being can be seen and people can interact with him face to face and live. That would be impossible with G-d as the Father.
2. This being is identified as the four-letter Name, which combined with the first attribute above, is possible only with Messiah.
3. Abraham bows before this figure and He accepts worship – which no angel would permit, but Messiah would allow.
4. This being speaks in the first person with the very voice of G-d, not as a mere messenger. Only the Messiah can do that.

Current Jewish theology on this passage is that all these beings were angelic, and none was the Divine. Some have concluded that as the angels departed to destroy Sodom, the Holy presence (separate and apart from those “angels”) then approached Abraham in a way not clear from the passage, and gave him a preview of future events.

I believe that their analysis of this passage is based upon their intention that they not in any way recognize anything which might support the Christian theology of Messiah, since that in essence would support the idea that the Christian Jesus is Messiah. Thus, modern Judaism has applied, in my view, a strained interpretation of this passage to conceal Yeshua as Messiah.

So, it is clear that I stand well apart from the theology of current Jewish thought on this matter. And that is acceptable for me, because I believe current Jewish theological thought on this passage is in error.

That being said, I wish to examine another aspect of this passage, that of hospitality and generosity.

Note that Abraham commanded the provision of three items for sustenance for the three visitors: bread, meat, and milk products. This act, provided well before the Torah's comments on a holy diet, has resulted in a lot of discussion among the Jewish people over the ages.

The discussion centers around another passage in the Torah, found in Leviticus, which addresses milk and meat.

Ex 23:20

You are not to boil a kid in the milk of its mother.¹

There is a lot of discussion on this particular passage, and one Sage actually notices that the command is not phrased “do not eat” such a combination. But the consensus finally boiled-down to a decision that this

¹ This command is repeated twice more at Exodus 34:26 and Deuteronomy 14:21

passage means one should not eat milk and meat together. There is even an opinion that consuming milk and meat would produce some form of *tzarat*.

The modern view of this theology is stated by the Chabad community.²

The laws of kosher require that in addition to not eating milk and meat together, we wait a specified period of time between eating meat and eating dairy.

After Dairy

After eating dairy and before eating meat, eat something pareve, which does not stick to the palate. Then rinse your mouth, or take a drink, and wash your hands. In addition, many have the custom of waiting a certain period of time — a half-hour or an hour. After eating certain hard cheeses, a six-hour waiting period is required (see Why the extended wait between eating "aged" cheese and meat?).

After Meat

² https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/133896/jewish/Waiting-Periods-Between-Meat-Dairy.htm

After eating meat foods, we wait six full hours before eating any dairy. The six-hour waiting period is standard for all Jews, except those groups which have halachically established other customs.

If a small piece of meat is discovered between the teeth, remove it and rinse the mouth, but an additional waiting period is not required (even if six hours have elapsed since eating meat). If even the smallest amount of food is chewed or swallowed, the full waiting period becomes necessary.

If food is tasted but immediately eliminated from the mouth before chewing or swallowing, then no waiting period is required. One should rinse the mouth well.

Meat and dairy foods may not be eaten at the same meal, even if they are in separate dishes and even if the waiting time elapses.

The Kehot Chumash; A Chasidic Commentary, Genesis 18:8:1 provides the following commentary.

He first brought some cream and milk, and when the calf that Ishmael had prepared was ready, he placed it before them: If Abraham, as we have seen, indeed observed all the laws of the Torah even before they were given at Mount Sinai, how could he have served milk and meat together at the same meal, blatantly violating the Torah's dietary laws?

Two possible answers to this question are: (a) Abraham served the dairy food first, for it is permissible to eat meat a short time after eating dairy food; and (b) Abraham offered the two types of food separately, allowing his guests to choose either type but not both. Being the host par excellence, Abraham brought out three tongues, one for each guest, anticipating the possibility that all three might choose to have a meat meal.

How much of the halacha expressed by the Chabad community, and the analysis by the Chasidic community is supported by Scripture? I dare say not a single word.

These writings show us the thought processes of men, as they seek to work-out their faith, and strive to live-out the words of Torah to the best of their abilities. But I believe unless there is adequate Scriptural support for their positions, such cannot be rightly classed under the title of "Torah

Law.” These would be more properly categorized as the halacha of a community who wishes to follow G-d in their own ways.

I believe that the leader of each community is free to establish halacha for that community according to the leading of the Spirit of G-d for that place, those people, and that time of history. Accordingly, I have not established a strict halacha in our community requiring separation of milk and meat. That being said, I often will refrain from combining milk and meat in my dining where people from the outside of our community are likely to observe. I do that not to align myself with the Chabad halacha, but I am careful in how I eat in public areas in order to fulfill the spirit of the direction given by Paul.

1 Cor 8:8-13

8 But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat. 9 But take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. 10 For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? 11 For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died. 12

And thus, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. 13

Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, that I might not cause my brother to stumble.

Rom 14:15-18

15 For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died. 16 Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; 17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

And it is clear from Scripture that they did eat from the dishes placed before them.

Gen 17:26

8 And he took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and placed it before them; and he was standing by them under the tree as they ate.

לפניהם	ויתן	עשה	אשר	ובן־הבקר	וחלב	חמאה	וילקח	8
before them;	it	and set	he had dressed,	which	and the calf	and milk,	butter,	And he took
<u>6440</u>	<u>9999</u>	<u>5414</u>	<u>6213</u>	<u>834</u>	<u>1121</u> <u>1241</u>	<u>2461</u>	<u>2529</u>	<u>3947</u>

וַיֹּאכְלוּ:	הָעֵץ	תַּחַת	עֲלֵיהֶם	עָמַד	וַהֲוָא־
and they did eat.	the tree,	under	by them	stood	and he
<u>398</u>	<u>6086</u>	<u>8478</u>	<u>5921</u>	<u>5975</u>	<u>1931</u>

The English translation above minimizes the portion a bit. It says “as they ate.” The Hebrew is a bit more concrete. It is literally, “and they ate.” This shows they ate the dishes placed before them.

So, I once again depart from the theological consensus of the modern Jewish theologians, because I am convinced that Abraham did not undertake the separation of milk and meat when he served angels, and the Messiah in bodily form, at the oaks of Mamre.

I am also convinced that if eating from milk dishes and meat dishes at the same meal were unholy, or against Torah (which has existed before creation) then neither the holy angels nor Messiah would have eaten.

With this preliminary discussion now finished, I wish to address the central core of my message – that of hospitality and generosity.

What Abraham did at the oaks of Mamre in welcoming guests, has from that day forward been a hallmark of our culture.

In Hebrew, the practice of welcoming guests — *hachnasat orchim* — is considered an act of lovingkindness, as is visiting the sick.³

Welcoming guests has arisen in importance because it is repeated more than any other command in Torah [36 times]. Our tradition teaches that it is of such an elevated importance, that it merits blessings both in this world, and the world to come. It is believed that its importance is even more lofty than welcoming the *Shechina* of G-d.

In our culture, this commandment extends even beyond the home, to the poor, travelers, and even strangers in need.⁴ It is in this way that we can more closely emulate the nature of G-d, and provide a witness to His ways in this world.

What we did during our Halloween outreach last Friday night is exactly what we as Jews should be doing – providing hospitality and a witness of the goodness of G-d to strangers in need. They all need G-d. Most wanted some hot chocolate and a few healthy snacks as well.

³ Talmud Shabbat 127b

⁴ Talmud Shabbat 127a

A book written to the Jews which appears in Scripture reinforces this idea, and gives a good encouragement.

Heb 13:1-3

13 Let love of the brethren continue. 2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.

I believe this statement served as a reminder of the actions of Abraham at the oaks of Mamre, and suggested that the phenomenon that happened there happens to others at later times.

Hospitality has as its core principle the concept of generosity. If you are not a generous person, you cannot provide hospitality. For hospitality requires you to give. We emulate G-d as we give to others, because one of the central attributes of G-d is that He is a giver. He even gave Himself to us as the greatest gift of all.

John 3:16-17

16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

In our culture, generosity is considered a high mitzvah – a highly exalted good deed. It even merits favor from G-d above the ordinary measure. The proverb condenses it for us.

Prov 11:25

25 The generous man will be prosperous,
And he who waters will himself be watered.

And the instructions to Timothy expand on this theme.

1 Tim 6:17-19

17 Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. 18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 storing up for themselves the

treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

Modern science has actually discovered that G-d has been right all along regarding generosity. Makai Allbert wrote an article entitled *Generosity: Losing a Little Means Gaining a Lot*.⁵

She quotes Abigail Marsh, a neuroscientist and expert on altruism, who concluded that altruistic people are less sensitive to negative emotions and have a “reduced responsiveness to anger, which is helpful because oversensitivity to anger can lead to hostility and aggression,”

She writes of a study in a lab at the University of British Columbia, involving a toddler, still too small to complete a sentence, who was asked to share one of her goldfish cracker treats with her plush puppet named “Monkey.” She did not hoard the treat, but quickly shared it with the puppet and made a sweet “YUMMM!” sound.

Each time the child gave Monkey one of her crackers, her face lit up with delight. This study was replicated with 200,000 children in 136 countries. Not all were affluent countries. It is the same in less wealthy nations such as Uganda. Children from different cultures, economic strata, and

⁵ Epoch Health, December 21, 2024

circumstances seem to find great joy when giving to others. And when the child gives something that is most precious to them, their joy is greater.

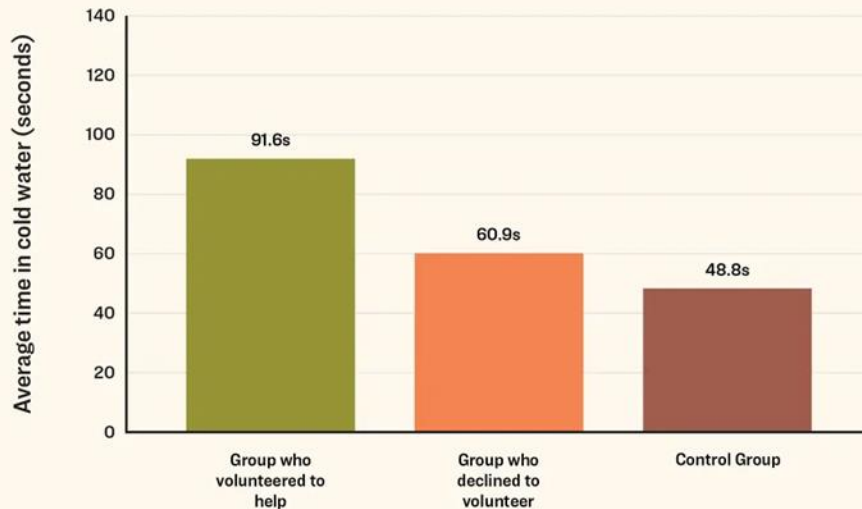
The article cites a study published in the journal *Health Psychology*, where researchers asked older adults with high blood pressure to spend money on others over three weeks.

The results were impressive: Participants' blood pressure dropped by magnitudes comparable to those seen with starting a new medication, exercising regularly, or making major changes to their diet, according to the authors.

They also found that a single act of generosity – as small as writing an encouraging note to someone – before engaging in a stressful activity, led to a measurable decrease in stress markers in the body.

Scientists also were able to measure the tolerance of pain between groups which were generous, and non-generous people. They put their study results into graphic form to show the striking differences between the groups.

Altruistic Individuals Have a Higher Pain Tolerance



Source: PNAS

EPOCH HEALTH

The generosity technique was applied to cancer patients, who also reported significant reductions in chronic pain levels, observed over a period of several weeks.

The article cites a study by William Chopik, an associate professor of personality psychology at Michigan State University. He suggests that generosity binds people together, fostering goodwill and cooperation.

Marsh says, “These findings highlight a truth about generosity: It isn’t always about getting something back; it’s not always tit for tat. For many, it’s based on their values, empathy, and the joy they get from helping someone or sharing. And indeed, compared with animals, humans stand out for their capacity to care deeply about a broad range of individuals, including strangers. We seem uniquely wired to find such acts of caring intrinsically rewarding.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, greed—the persistent desire for more, whether it’s money, material goods, or recognition—seems to have less favorable effects on health and happiness. Greedy individuals may experience temporary satisfaction from acquiring something new, such as a sense of pride after making a big purchase. However, that feeling fades quickly. Because greedy people experience “never-enough” mentalities, they develop a dysregulated reward system comparable to that of people with an addiction, which can lead to dissatisfaction, more stress, and diminished well-being.”

A study published in the journal *Collabra: Psychology* found that the type of giving, the perceived effect of the giving, and the context significantly determined the benefits of generosity.

Gifting a combined experience such as taking someone out for dinner or treating them to a concert tends to foster closer social bonds. On the other hand, material gifts, while appreciated, are less consistently associated with relationship-strengthening outcomes unless they are deeply personalized or tied to shared experiences.

The study suggests that these differences arise because experiences are more likely to create meaningful connections, fond memories, and a sense of shared joy. On the other hand, material gifts may sometimes feel transactional or less personal.

Generosity seems to have greatest depth with greater authenticity. Genuine, self-motivated giving enhances happiness, and giving because of external pressures tends to diminish or even negate all benefits.

The social pressures of holiday-obligated giving seem to amplify stress and diminish the benefits of being generous.

Scientists are speculating why generosity brings health benefits, and they seek to explain this by using medical terminology. I find a simpler answer to the puzzle. G-d is smart, and when we do what He says, we get benefits we don't understand. Torah is the Tree of Life, and happy are those who take hold of it. All its paths are peace.