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**Vayera: Drinking, Washing, Anchoring**

Rabbi Shmuel Silber

*“Now the Lord appeared to him in the plains of Mamre, and he was sitting at the entrance of the tent when the day was hot. And he lifted his eyes and saw, and behold, three men were standing beside him, and he saw and he ran toward them from the entrance of the tent, and he prostrated himself to the ground. And he said, ‘My lords, if only I have found favor in your eyes, please do not pass on from beside your servant. Please let a little water be taken, and bathe your feet, and recline under the tree’” (Bereishis 14:1-4).*

Avraham, just a few days post-circumcision sits, at the entranceway of his tent longingly looking for guests to invite into his home. Avraham, the paradigm of *chesed* (loving kindness), feels incomplete without the opportunity to host guests and attend to their needs. This great man, our Patriarch was a true giver and was always on the lookout for opportunities to help and be there for the other. It is intriguing to note the detail in which the Torah conveys this episode. We are told what Avraham offered the guests, which items he served himself and which items he asked his servants to bring. Why the need for such specificity? If the Torah’s point is to convey to us the need to be *baalei chesed* (kind and charitable people) this could have been accomplished without all the detail. All we need to know is that despite physical pain and advanced age, Avraham was pre-occupied with doing good for others. If Avraham could do it at 100 years old then we can push ourselves as well. But still, why the need to tell us about the water, washing of feet and reclining under a tree?

The Imrei Yosef (Spinka Rebbe, Rav Yosef Meir Weiss 1838-1909) provides a beautiful insight. The Rebbe explains that the Torah is not simply providing us with information about Avraham’s hospitality; it is providing us with the framework for successful living.

**Mayim (water)** is a reference to Torah. Just as water sustains life; Torah, spirituality, a relationship with God are life-sustaining necessities in the life of the Jew.

**Rachatzu Ragleychem (wash your feet)** references the dirt of our mistakes which weighs us down and prevents us from moving forward. We all have dreams, aspirations and finish lines we want to cross. Yet, at times we feel unable to do so as we are sullied and tarnished by the mistakes and missteps of our past.

**V’Hishanu Tachas Ha’Eytz (recline on the tree)** is reference to the Tree of Life, the Torah (*Etz Chaim He*, it is a living tree), as the Pasuk calls it “the tree” rather than “a tree.” Torah and spirituality have to be our anchor in life. Our relationship with God is the rock we lean on in difficult times. We don’t want our spirituality to be a recreational activity, but the very anchor of our existence.

If we put all of these pieces together we emerge with an incredible message:

**Yukach Na Mi’at Mayim, (take a little bit of water)** – God doesn’t ask us for perfection. He just asks for a little bit of growth each and every day. Drink a bit more water, ingest a bit more spirituality, and perform a bit more kindness every day. As long as today is better than yesterday, and tomorrow is better than today we’re doing great.

**Rachatzu Ragleychem (wash your feet)**– If we grow a little bit each day, if we drink a bit more water of spirituality, we will find ourselves better equipped to clean the dirt of our mistakes. We won’t live in the cycle of guilt and will find a way to let go of those things which hold us back. We will wash away the dirt and give ourselves the strength to continue the journey.

**V’Hishanu Tachas Ha’Eytz (recline on the tree)** – If we drink the water and clean our feet we will anchor ourselves in a life of holiness. Torah will become our guiding light and our relationship with God our greatest treasure.

Avraham Avinu teaches us the power of *chesed*, but he also prophetically conveys to us the game plan for successful living; **drinking, washing and anchoring**. May we find the strength to actualize his message.