



## Masterpiece

Rabbi Yosef Dovid Rothbart, Rabbinic Administrator

כי עתה ידעתי כי ירא אלהים אתה ולא חשכת את בנך את  
יחידך ממני (בראשית כב, יב)

When I was in elementary school we had an assignment to design a civilization. We had to decide on many factors such as whether the economy would be based on agriculture or manufacturing. Would a monarch rule the people or was it a democracy? Finally, we had to write a charter and style a flag.

The due date arrived and each group presented their civilization to the rest of the class. Despite each project being unique, there was a consistent theme that they all shared. The groups that just wanted to finish and worked in order to satisfy the minimum requirements, presented simple projects lacking a certain dash of imagination and excitement. While those who invested themselves into the assignment produced elementary school age masterpieces complete with coffee dyed charters sporting burnt edges. The amount of effort that was expended was evident from what was presented to the class.

When a person performs a *mitzva*, he is not merely doing something that impacts this physical world. Rebbe Eliezer *ben* Yakov tells us (Avos 4, 11) that when a person performs a *mitzva* he creates a spiritual entity. But how this angel appears will depend on how the *mitzva* was performed. Will he produce an entity which lags behind the others due to a lethargic action? Or, will his energetic deed generate a vibrant angel that soars towards the throne of *Hashem*, passionately defending its maker.

This reality, writes the Vilna Gaon, enables us to appreciate a *Pasuk* in this week's *Parsha*. After travelling for three days, Avraham and Yitzchak finally arrived at Har Hamoria. The wood that had been taken from their

home earlier that week is stacked up on the *mizbeich* as the defining moment of Avraham's tests arrived.

Avraham reached for the knife and extended it towards his 37 year old son. At that moment the heavens open up. "Avraham, Avraham," the *malach* called out. "Do not even injure your son." כי עתה ידעתי כי ירא אלקים אתה ולא חשכת את – "For now I know that you are a person who fears his Creator, and you did not withhold your only son from me."

What did the emissary of *Hashem* mean by the words "withhold **from me**"? Was Avraham ever intending that his son be offered up to an angel? Certainly not. So why did the *malach* tell Avraham "and you did not withhold your only son from me"?

When Avraham was instructed to offer up his son, he was given an opportunity to create an angelic masterpiece. Now he had to decide how to draw it. Would he stab his brush into dull brown paint and resentfully listen to his directives praying the entire time that he not have to go through with it. Or would he plunge his brush into vivid blue pigment preferring bright cheerful colours that express his love to his Creator and excitement of having yet another chance to demonstrate his feeling towards Him.

The *malach* that Avraham produced was dazzling. This perfect angel glowed with the love and heavenly fear that Avraham possessed. And this is what the angel told Avraham. "For now I know that you are a person who fears his Creator, and you did not withhold your only son." How is this known? "From me – from my being a perfect angel created from a perfect act."

# Twin Miracles

Reb Shmuel (real name), a *talmud* of Rav Michel Yehuda Lefkowitz, was a *talmud chocham* who dedicated his life to strengthening the relationship Jewish children had with their Heavenly Father. To that effect, he established an organization in one of the cities in central Israel which would teach those who wished to deepen this relationship and guide them on how to go about doing so.

As things go, institutions devoted to spreading *Torah* knowledge and kindness typically do not merit sufficient grants to sustain them. Consequently they have to find another means of support to fill the financial void in order to continue their work.

This meant that the organization would have to outsource its financial burden to Jews from other areas of Israel and to those abroad who would consider it a privilege to partner up with an administration whose focus is to spread awareness of *Hashem*.

At one point, Reb Shmuel established a “*vaad yedidim*” – Jews who were blessed with warm hearts, an appreciation of the spiritual needs of the Jewish *neshama* and were willing to help on a regular basis to raise support in London. But these Jews had one condition before they finalized their partnership with Reb Shmuel. “Besides your organization, we are very busy with the needs of the local community. In order for this arrangement to work, you must appoint a talented Jew who will coordinate our activities and as well, will communicate between us and you.”

They recommended Avraham as the appropriate person. Immediately, Reb Shmuel contacted him, explained the great importance of what he would be doing, and asked him to accept the position. Avraham thought for a few moments before shaking his head in the negative. He was simply too busy and it was not possible to wholly devote himself to the sacred role.

Disconsolately, Reb Shmuel thanked Avraham and walked slowly towards the door. Before he reached the door, the voice of Avraham’s wife calling out from an adjacent room reached them. Avraham excused himself and asked his guest to wait a minute. Reb Shmuel waited as his host went to the other room to see what his wife wanted. After about ten minutes of whispering he returned, and presented the following offer: “We

have been married for about six years now and we have not been granted any children. We know that you have a close relationship with Rav Lefkowitz. If you get a promise from Rav Lefkowitz that we will become parents to a son, then I will give myself up entirely for your cause.”

Not sure what to say, Reb Shmuel offered that Avraham visit *Eretz Yisrael* and together they would go to Rav Michel Yehuda. A few months later Reb Shmuel and Avraham stood together in a house very different than the house that they were last together in. This was the house of one of the generation’s leaders. Quietly, Avraham, after being introduced, presented his request: a promise for a son.

However, Rav Michel Yehuda did not promise. Instead, he merely told Avraham that it should be the will of *Hashem* “that in the merit of your bringing Jews closer to the Creator of the world, you will be remembered with a healthy child.” It was not quite a promise, but it was sufficient for Avraham. He “snatched” the *bracha* with two hands and considered it fulfilled. And indeed it was. Nine months later the phone in *Eretz Yisrael* was answered to the excited voices of new parents of twins – a son and a daughter.

But the merit of Avraham’s decision extended beyond his now busy home. A few months prior to that call, a wealthy man from London had visited Rav Michel Yehuda to discuss his issue. Within the simple walls that had been privy to the private struggles of so many people, the man wept as he told the great leader what he was going through. HMRC (the English CRA) had audited his business and were accusing him of serious charges which could result in a prison sentence.

Rav Lefkowitz advised him to return to England. “Go back to London, look for a *mila* that is in your area. While the baby is crying, *daven* and *Hashem* will help.”

With a plan in his head and confidence in his stride, the man returned to his house and looked out for notices about *shalom zachors*. Amazingly, for several months no baby boys were born.

The first *bris mila* which came after some time was that of the son of Avraham; the precious result of the *bracha* of Rav Michel Yehuda Lefowitz.

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# Questions from the H.I.T. HOTLINE

**I saw something in a store that is damaged. The store I found it in is the type of store which will give me back more than I spent on the damaged item. Am I allowed to purchase the product with the intention of returning it later for a profit?**

It would seem that this would not be allowed. The reason why stores are willing to have such a return policy is to make up for the frustration that the customer experienced by buying damaged goods. If a person purchases the item with the intention of returning it, he did not suffer from a bad experience. Therefore, it would be forbidden to buy the item in order to return it for a profit. Perhaps one can add that the Shulchan Aruch (*Choshen Mishpat* 232, 10) writes that if a person recognizes a product's deficiencies at the time of the purchase, he cannot claim later that this was a מקח תוטט. Certainly then, if a person notices the damage that a product has at the time of purchase, he cannot return it for a gain.

**I lent two people one hundred dollars and the loan is due. One of the borrowers is more accessible to me than the other one. Can I ask him for the entire loan or is he able to claim that he is only responsible for half of the loan?**

Unless a person makes up otherwise, the Shulchan Aruch (*Choshen Mishpat* 77, 1) writes that when two people borrow together, each one is considered to be a borrower on half the loan and a guarantor on the other half. Therefore, the Shulchan Aruch continues that the lender must first ask each borrower for their share of the loan. If one of the borrowers is unable to pay back, then he would be allowed to ask one person to pay up the entire debt.

**To have your question  
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# KIDZ KORNER



# TIDBITS...

In this week's Parsha Lot and his daughters run to a cave to avoid being destroyed along with the city. Here are some interesting facts about animals whose home is a cave.

- Kaua'i Cave (Hawaii) wolf spider, is unique among wolf spiders which are known for their sharp eyesight. This semi-transparent and earth-toned with silver-haired spider has a vacant space where eyes should be and relies exclusively on its sensitive hairs to enable it to track prey.
- During the summer night outside Bracken Cave, Texas, a person can watch millions of free-tailed bats fly out of the cave and climb up into the sky like a big, black cloud. And the bats keep coming and coming... for three hours.
- The olm is an amphibian that only lives in underground caves. Because they spend their entire life in complete darkness, they have skin devoid of pigment giving them a whitish-pink colour. They can live up to 10 years without food.

## RIDDLE



### How is it possible for a person to be called up for three consecutive *aliyos*?

Please send in your answers to [yrothbart@halachainstitute.com](mailto:yrothbart@halachainstitute.com). Any correct answer that is received by Tuesday will be entered into a raffle to win a \$10 gift certificate to Miriam's Judaica.

**LAST WEEK'S RIDDLE: What was Noach's second name?**

**ANSWER: The Sefer Hayashar writes that although Mesushelach called him Noach, his father's name for him was Menachem.**

Thank you to all those who sent in an answer to last week's riddle.

**WINNER OF LAST WEEK'S PRIZE: Dina Mittelman**

Under the leadership of the Rabbonim of H.I.T.  
Rabbi Yacov Felder, Chairman

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