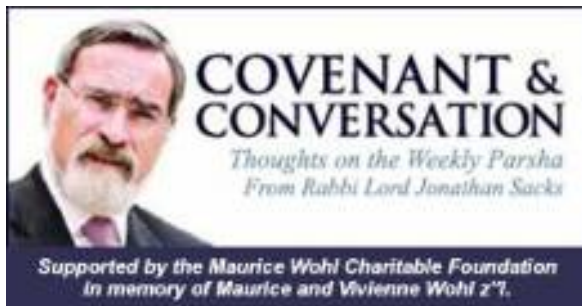


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## On Leadership: Against Hate

Ki Tetzei contains more laws than any other parsha in the Torah, and it is possible to be overwhelmed by this *embarrass de richesse* of detail. One verse, however, stands out by its sheer counter-intuitiveness:

Do not despise an Edomite, because he is your brother.  
Do not despise the Egyptian, because you were a stranger in his land. (Deut. 23:8)

These are very unexpected commands. Understanding them will teach us an important lesson about leadership.

First, a general point. Jews have been subjected to racism more and longer than any other nation on earth. Therefore we should be doubly careful never to be guilty of it ourselves. We believe

that God created each of us, regardless of colour, class, culture or creed, in His image. If we look down on other people because of their race, then we are demeaning God's image and failing to respect *kavod ha-briyot*, human dignity.

If we think less of a person because of the colour of his or her skin, we are repeating the sin of Aaron and Miriam - "Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married, for he had married a Cushite woman" (Num. 12:1). There are midrashic interpretations that read this passage differently but the plain sense is that they looked down on Moses' wife because, like Cushite women generally, she had dark skin, making this one of the first recorded instances of colour prejudice. For this sin Miriam was struck with leprosy.

Instead we should remember the lovely line from The Song of Songs: "I am black but beautiful, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon. Do not stare at me because I am dark, because the sun has looked upon me" (Song 1:5).

Jews cannot complain that others have racist attitudes toward them if they hold racist attitudes toward others. "First correct yourself then [seek to] correct others," says the Talmud(1) *Tanakh* contains negative evaluations of some other nations, but always and only because of their moral failures, never because of ethnicity or skin colour.

Now to Moses' two commands against hate,(2) both of which are surprising. "Do not despise the Egyptian, because you were a stranger in his land." This is extraordinary. The Egyptians enslaved the Israelites, planned a programme

against them of slow genocide, and then refused to let them go despite the plagues that were devastating the land. Are these reasons not to hate?

True: but the Egyptians had initially provided a refuge for the Israelites at a time of famine. They had honoured Joseph and made him second-in-command. The evils they committed against them under "a new king who did not know of Joseph" (Ex. 1:8) were at the instigation of Pharaoh himself, not the people as a whole. Besides which it was the daughter of that Pharaoh who had rescued Moses and adopted him.

The Torah makes a clear distinction between the Egyptians and the Amalekites. The latter were destined to be perennial enemies of Israel, but not the former. In a later age Isaiah would make a remarkable prophecy, that a day would come when the Egyptians would suffer their own oppression. They would cry out to God, who would rescue them just as he had rescued the Israelites:

When they cry out to the LORD because of their oppressors, he will send them a saviour and defender, and he will rescue them. So the LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians, and in that day they will acknowledge the LORD. (Isaiah 19:20-21)

The wisdom of Moses' command not to despise Egyptians still shines through today. If the people continued to hate their erstwhile oppressors, Moses would have taken the Israelites out of Egypt but would have failed to take Egypt out of the Israelites. They would still be slaves, not physically but psychologically. They would be slaves to the past, held captive

by the chains of resentment, unable to build the future. *To be free, you have to let go of hate.* That is a difficult truth but a necessary one.

No less surprising is Moses' insistence: "Do not despise an Edomite, because he is your brother." Edom was, of course, the other name of Esau. There was a time when Esau hated Jacob and vowed to kill him. Besides which, before the twins were born, Rebecca received an oracle telling her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the elder will serve the younger" (Gen. 25:23). Whatever these words mean, they seem to imply that there will be eternal conflict between the two brothers and their descendants.

At a much later age, during the Second Temple period, the prophet Malachi said: "'Was not Esau Jacob's brother?' declares the LORD. 'Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated ...'" (Malachi 1:2-3). Centuries later still, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said, "It is a halakhah [rule, law, inescapable truth] that Esau hates Jacob." (3) Why then does Moses tell us not to despise Esau's descendants?

The answer is simple. *Esau may hate Jacob. It does not follow that Jacob should hate Esau.* To answer hate with hate is to be dragged down to the level of your opponent. When, in the course of a television programme, I asked Judea Pearl, father of the murdered journalist Daniel Pearl, why he was working for reconciliation between Jews and Muslims, he replied with heartbreaking lucidity, "Hate killed my son. Therefore I am determined to fight hate." As Martin Luther King said: "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." Or

as Kohelet said, there is "a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace" (Eccl. 3:8).

It was none other than Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai who said that when Esau met Jacob for the last time, he kissed and embraced him "with a full heart." (4) Hate, especially between brothers, is not eternal and inexorable. Always be ready, Moses seems to have implied, for reconciliation between enemies.

Contemporary Games Theory suggests the same. Martin Nowak's programme "Generous Tit-for-Tat" is a winning strategy in the scenario known as the Iterated Prisoner's Dilemma. Tit-for-tat says: start by being nice to your opponent, then do to him what he does to you (in Hebrew, *middah kneged middah*). Generous Tit-for-Tat says, don't always do to him what he does to you or you may find yourself locked into a mutually destructive cycle of retaliation. Every so often ignore (i.e. forgive) your opponent's last harmful move. That, roughly speaking, is what the sages meant when they said that God originally created the world under the attribute of strict justice but saw that it could not survive. Therefore He built into it the principle of compassion.(5)

Moses' two commands against hate are testimony to his greatness as a leader. It is the easiest thing in the world to become a leader by mobilising the forces of hate. That is what Radovan Karadzic and Slobodan Milosevic did in the former Yugoslavia and it led to mass murder and ethnic cleansing. It is what the state controlled media did - describing Tutsis as *inyenzi*, "cockroaches" - before the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. It is what dozens of preachers of hate are doing today, often using

the Internet to communicate paranoia and incite acts of terror.

This was the technique mastered by Hitler as a prelude to the worst-ever crime of man against man. The language of hate is capable of creating enmity between people of different faiths and ethnicities who have lived peaceably together for centuries. It has consistently been the most destructive force in history, and even knowledge of the Holocaust has not put an end to it, even in Europe. It is the unmistakable mark of toxic leadership.

In his classic work, *Leadership*, James MacGregor Burns distinguishes between transactional and transformational leaders. The former address people's interests. The latter attempt to raise their sights. "Transforming leadership is elevating. It is moral but not moralistic. Leaders engage with followers, but from higher levels of morality; in the enmeshing of goals and values both leaders and followers are raised to more principled levels of judgement." (6)

Leadership at its highest transforms those who exercise it and those who are influenced by it. The great leaders make people better, kinder, nobler than they would otherwise be. That was the achievement of Washington, Lincoln, Churchill, Gandhi and Mandela. The paradigm case was Moses, the man who had more lasting influence than any other leader in history.

He did it by teaching the Israelites not to hate. Hate the sin but not the sinner. Do not forget the past but do not be held captive by it. Be willing to fight your enemies but never allow yourself to be defined by them or become like them. Learn to love and forgive. Acknowledge the evil men do, but stay focused on the good that is in

our power to do. Only thus do we raise the moral sights of humankind and help redeem the world we share.

1. Baba Metsia 107b.
2. Whenever I refer, here and elsewhere, to "Moses' commands," I mean, of course, to imply that these were given by Divine instruction and revelation. This, in a deep sense, is why God chose Moses, a man who said repeatedly of himself that he was not a man of words. The words he spoke were those of God. That, and that alone, is what gives them timeless authority for the people of the covenant.
3. Sifri, Bamidbar, Behaalotecha, 69.
4. Sifri ad loc.
5. See Rashi to Genesis 1:1, s.v. *bara*.
6. James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership*, Harper Perennial, 2010, 455.



## The Difference between Moab and Amalek

**Devarim, 23:4-5:** An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the congregation of Hashem, even their tenth generation shall not enter the congregation of Hashem. Because they did not greet you with bread and water on the road when you were leaving Egypt...

**Devarim, 25:17-19:** Remember what Amalek did to you, on the way when you were leaving Egypt. That he happened upon you on the way... You shall wipe out the memory of Amalek from under the heaven – you shall not forget.

The Torah Portion outlines a number of Mitzvot

related to nations who harmed the Jewish people in their time in the desert. Firstly, the Torah records the incident where the nations of Ammon and Moab refused to provide the Jewish people with much needed bread and water while they were in the desert. This action was greatly exacerbated by the fact that these nations owed their very existence to the Patriarch of the Jewish people, Avraham. Avraham saved the life of his nephew Lot, the progenitor of these two nations, when he was captured by the Four Kings. Yet, they demonstrated that they were very ungrateful people, when they refused to provide the basic needs of the Jewish people. Consequently, the Torah commands that it is forbidden for a male Moabite or Ammonite convert to marry into the Jewish people, and this even applies to descendants of such a convert ad infinitum.

At the end of the Portion, the Torah recalls the terrible actions of Amalek, who attacked the vulnerable Jewish people in the desert, when every other nation feared doing so, due to the great miracles that had occurred during the Exodus from Egypt. Because of this heinous behavior, God commands the Jewish people to wipe out the whole nation, and everything connected to them.

It would seem that Amalek's actions and the consequential command to wipe them out, indicates that Amalek is considered far worse than Ammon and Moab. Yet, on analysis of further laws related to Amalek, a significant difficulty arises: It is evident from the Rambam<sup>1</sup> and Ra'avad<sup>2</sup> that the command to destroy Amalek does not apply if an Amalekite refutes the heretical and hateful attitude of his nation. Moreover, a genuine Amalekite convert is

accepted into the Jewish people, and he is allowed to marry into the Jewish people<sup>3</sup>! How can it be that that a Moabite convert and his descendants are treated so harshly that they can never marry a Jew, yet an Amalekite may do so?

A possible answer to this question can be found by delving deeper into the root of the failings of these nations: The flaws of Ammon and Moab are in the realm of character traits. In their refusal to help the Jewish people in a basic way, they demonstrated that they were inherently ungrateful. This is such a negative character trait, that it is ingrained in this nation to the extent that the Torah commands that even if an Ammonite or Moabite converts, he can never marry Jews because that would cause their bad traits to infiltrate into the Jewish people.

In contrast Amalek's shortcomings are not directly connected to bad traits, rather they are in the realm of outlook (hashkafa). Their belief system contradicts everything in the Torah, and their goal is to destroy the Jewish nation and what it represents. As bad as this is, since it is essentially an attitude and not an engrained trait, it is possible to uproot, and change one's outlook. Accordingly, if an Amalekite shows that he has genuinely rejected everything that his nation of birth represents, then he is allowed to marry a Jew, because there is no concern that the negative aspects of Amalek will infiltrate into the Jewish people<sup>4</sup>.

This idea can be used to answer another difficult question that relates to Amalek. King Shaul was commanded to wipe out Amalek, and did destroy everyone with the exception of Agag<sup>5</sup>. Yet, a few months later, the Prophet tells us that David was fighting Amalekites<sup>6</sup>. Where did all these Amalekites come from? One possible

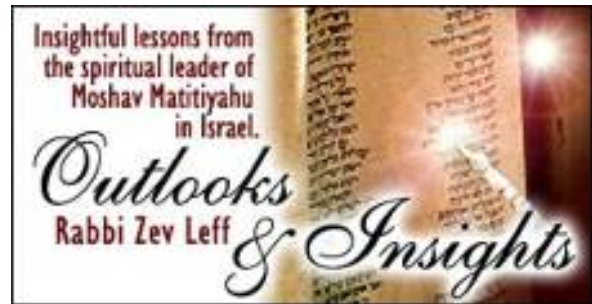
approach is that just as an Amalekite can reject the outlook of Amalek and thereby remove from himself the obligation to be destroyed, a non-Amalekite can assume the outlook of Amalek and thereby be considered in the category of an Amalekite, and bring upon himself the obligation to be destroyed<sup>7</sup>.

The idea that one can join another nation is not limited to Amalek. The same approach can be used to explain how the nation of Midian was fighting the Jewish nation in the time of Gidon, when the Midianites were destroyed in battle with the Jewish nation in the desert.

If this is the case, the question arises as to if this idea applies to Ammon and Moab: If a person who is not a genetic descendant of Moab, for example, assumes the identity of a Moabite, is it forbidden for a Jew to marry him if he converts? This question is the subject of a dispute in the Gemara<sup>8</sup>, but the conclusion is that such a person does not assume the halachic status of a Moabite because Sencharib scattered all the nations, and so it can be assumed that a person who lives in Moab and calls himself a Moabite is not a descendant of the Moabites of the Torah, and therefore one can marry such a convert. Why here do we not say that he assumes the halachic status of a Moabite? The answer is based on the principle above, that the root problem with Moab is not their outlook but their character traits. Their bad traits are so deeply engrained that they will affect all future descendants. However, this does not apply to a person who is not genetically descended from the original Moabites. Hence, even if he identifies as a Moabite, and even assumes their attitudes, he is not included in the prohibition to marry a Moabite convert.

We have seen that while a nation's inherent traits cannot be significantly changed, a nation's outlook can be changed. On a personal level this teaches us that it is very important to develop a Torah true outlook through studying appropriate works on Jewish philosophy and mussar (self-growth)<sup>9</sup>. Doing this can also help him improve his character traits, since a good outlook can teach a person how to improve his character traits.

1. Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Melachim, Chapter 6, Halacha 4.
2. Hasagot HaRa'avad, Ibid.
3. One proof given for this is that the Gemara tells us that descendants of the Amalekite, Haman, learnt Torah in Bnei Brak. There are Rabbinic sources that seem to contradict the Rambam's ruling. See Mishbetsot Zahav, Shmuel Beit, pp.18-20, for an extensive discussion of this issue.
4. In a similar vein, the Drashot HaRan explains that Avraham did not want Yitzchak to marry a member of the Canaanite nation because of their inherently bad character traits. Whereas, even though Lavan had very bad beliefs, Avraham wanted Yitzchak to marry his children, because their families' inherent traits were not bad.
5. Shmuel Aleph, Chapter 15.
6. Shmuel Beit, Chapter 1.
7. Rabbi Yisrael Reisman points out this only applies if any real Amalekites are still alive. Once they are all wiped out, then it is no longer possible to assume the Amalekite identity. Also, see Mishbetsot Zahav, Shmuel Beit, p.6 for an alternative answer in the name of the Siach Mordechai.
8. Brachot, 28a.
9. Possible examples of this are: Michtav M'Eliyahu by Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler; Sichot Mussar by Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz; Alei Shor by Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe; Torat Avraham by Rabbi Avraham Grodzinsky, hy"d', Mashgiach of Slobodka, and father in law of Rabbi Wolbe and Rabbi Chaim Kreiswirt.



## Fundamentals of Education

*"When a man has a wayward, rebellious son, who does not obey his father and mother, they shall have him flogged. If he still does not listen to them... [the parents] must declare to the elders of his city, 'Our son is wayward and rebellious. He does not listen to us, and is an (exceptional) glutton and drunkard.'"*  
 "(Deut. 21:18)

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 71a) says that there never was a rebellious son executed by the court. The topic was recorded in the Torah in order to learn and receive reward. But even if there never was a rebellious son, we can learn a great deal about raising children from a careful study of the Torah's description of the rebellious son. By studying the factors that help create a son so tainted that it is a kindness to kill him while he is still young and has not yet committed all the heinous crimes he otherwise would, we can learn to do the opposite with our own children.

It must be clear at the outset that there are no sure-fire rules of education that apply to all children at all times. Reishis Chachmah quotes a Midrash that it is easier to raise a legion of olive trees in the Galilee, where the soil and climate are not conducive to growing olive trees, than to raise one child in the Land of Israel, even

though Israel is conducive to proper education, since the atmosphere itself helps to imbue one with wisdom and holiness.

Children are not objects to be fashioned at will, but rather human beings who have their own free will and can reject, if they so choose, even the best education. The most a parent can hope to achieve, as Chiddushei HaRim points out regarding all learning, is to put the words of Torah on the heart of the child so that when the heart opens up, the Torah found on it will sink into the receptive heart.

### STRONG ROOTS

The law of the rebellious son is applicable only when the child is age 13 and for the next three months, i.e., at the very inception of his manhood. This points to the importance of a proper foundation in the education of children - that early education forms the basis of the child's experience and hence is the root and foundation of his life.

Avos deRav Nosson expounds on the Mishnah (Avot 4:25), "One who studies Torah as a child, to what can he be likened? To ink, written on fresh paper." Just as ink is readily absorbed into new paper, so the Torah learned when young permeates the very fiber of the child's being.

Alshich explains the injunction (Proverbs 22:6), "*Educate the youth according to his path,*" as a warning to put him on the proper path *before* he develops the wrong path on his own. The proper beginning is crucial, for it forms the root, and any blemish in the root will manifest itself a thousand-fold in the resultant growth. A strong root, however, insures a healthy plant.

### FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS

The Torah describes the rebellious son as not

heeding the voice (*kol*) of his father and mother. Maharal points out that a *kol* denotes a voice or noise, something not necessarily intelligible. The rebellious son listens to his parents when their words make sense to him, but when their directives are not understood by him, he ignores them.

A child must be taught to rely on his parents' instructions and trust in their desire and ability to guide him on the proper path, even though he may not understand or grasp the wisdom of their directions. Though a parent should try to explain to the child the reasons for his directions and instructions, the child must be taught that in the end whether he understands or not, he must accept his parents' authority.

The Talmud learns from the phrase, "*he does not listen to our voices,*" that to be deemed a rebellious son, both parents must have similar voices. Both parents' guidance must reflect the same values, and they must be consistent in their instruction. If the parents do not speak with one voice, their child cannot be deemed rebellious, because the blame for his rebellious behavior is not his alone.

Further, the parents must point at their son and say, "*this son of ours.*" If the parents are blind and thus incapable of pointing him out, the son cannot be deemed a rebellious son. The requirement that the parents be able to see hints to the necessity of parents viewing each child as an individual, with unique gifts and needs, who must be educated according to his individual personality. If parents are blind to the child's individuality and educate him according to a predetermined formula, the child can also not be fully blamed.

**SPIRITUAL STATUS**

To be classified as a rebellious son, he must steal money from his parents to eat and drink like a glutton. This conduct shows, says Ibn Ezra, a distorted outlook. The glutton makes the pleasures of this world his only goal rather than seeing this world as the place to prepare for eternal spiritual life. The meat and wine he consumed could have been fully kosher. It is not enough to teach a child that he may eat only kosher food. He must also understand why, so that he does not become a Jew in form but not in substance.

The Talmud explains that the rebellious son is killed now, because if allowed to continue on the same path he will eventually become a robber and murderer. He is killed for his own benefit so that he doesn't lose his portion in the World to Come.

From this we learn the most important lesson of child-rearing. A parent must focus on the soul of his child and his eternal status, even more intensely than his physical well-being. What parent would think of exposing his child to even a slight chance of catching a serious communicable disease? How much more so should a parent protect his child from an environment that might exert negative spiritual influences. If we fret over our child's ability to earn a living, how much more so should we be concerned that he or she grow to be a successful Jew.

We should remember in Elul that there is no greater merit for the Day of Judgment than having raised a child properly. The Zohar teaches that when an individual appears before the Heavenly Court, after 120 years, God inquires if he educated his children properly. If

the answer is affirmative, God refuses to accept any more testimony against him, for the merit of guiding his children properly overshadows everything else.

May we learn the deep lessons contained in the Torah's discussion of the rebellious son, so that we merit to raise children fully occupied in Torah and mitzvot.

**Reward of Long Life**

Greetings from the holy city of Jerusalem!

This week's parsha discusses the mitzvah of *Shiluach HaKen* - sending away the mother bird. The Torah states (Deut. 22:7) that on chancing upon a bird's nest on the way, "you should send the mother bird away and take the young for yourself - in order that it will be good for you and that you will have a long life." This guarantee of longevity is found elsewhere in the Torah concerning another mitzvah, that of honoring one's father and mother (Exodus 20:12). Why do these specific commandments share a common reward?

Furthermore, the Talmud (Brachot 33b) instructs us to silence a person who, in his prayers, requests, "Just as Your mercy, God, has reached the bird's nest, so may it reach us as well," as this is considered an improper way to pray. The Talmud, on the same page, asks why this is so.



According to one opinion, the reason is that he is wrongly referring to God's commandments as merciful, when in fact they are simply decrees. Why is this mitzvah regarded as merely a decree from God, as opposed to a merciful instruction from God? Is it not a fact that we are being sensitive by sending the mother bird away prior to taking her young?

The Vilna Gaon explains that a person's completeness in serving God is established only when he masters two diametrically opposed character traits, for instance the antithetical attributes of compassion and harshness. If a person possesses only one of the traits, for example in this case, compassion, it does not necessarily determine his righteousness - because the individual may simply be a naturally kind person and need not have worked on managing the emotion and directing it appropriately. If, however, he possesses both opposing traits and displays control in utilizing these conflicting emotions correctly, it proves that he has worked on managing his emotions, and for this he is considered a righteous person.

There are two mitzvot that symbolically represent these opposing traits: (1) honoring one's parents and (2) sending away the mother bird. The former mitzvah characterizes the quality of compassion: Tending to one's parents, particularly as they become older and require more help, demands much compassion and concern from the caregiver. The latter mitzvah of *Shiluach HaKen* represents the attribute of harshness, as sending away the mother bird will cause her much distress as she is forcibly parted from her young.

(Maimonides supports the idea that this mitzvah is indeed not a merciful one and remarks that if

the aim of the mitzvah was for the sake of being compassionate and merciful to the mother bird, God would have forbidden us to slaughter birds altogether!)

### IDENTICAL REWARD

Based on this insight, we can understand why the mitzvot of sending the bird and honoring parents share the identical reward of longevity. The Vilna Gaon explains that longevity symbolically represents completion, as a long life is often associated with a full and complete life. Thus through these mitzvot a person can reach completeness as he learns to control and use these opposing emotions accordingly. A reward of longevity (which symbolically represents completeness) is therefore highly fitting and appropriate!

We could suggest that, according to the Vilna Gaon, performance of only one of these commandments is insufficient to deserve the promised reward. Only by doing both does a person become "complete," as he has demonstrated mastery over contradictory emotions in order to serve God with all parts of his being, and therefore merits the reward of long life.

The juxtaposition of two specific verses in Psalms highlights this further. Psalms 149:7 speaks of taking revenge on nations committed to our annihilation, and just two verses later it talks of God's "splendor to all His pious ones." The Vilna Gaon explains that this Psalm teaches us that although naturally pious people are kind and compassionate, they nevertheless know to take action and act harshly when the situation and circumstances are appropriate, as dictated by God and His Torah.

It is now obvious why the Talmud considers it improper if a person calls on God to show him mercy the way God displays mercy to the mother bird: A prayer of this nature is suggesting that this mitzvah represents a compassionate and merciful act when, in fact it is exactly the opposite! *Shiluach HaKen* is a harsh, even cruel, act and God instructs us in this mitzvah in order to teach us a lesson that our actions should all be for the sake of Heaven and not just because we are compelled by our instincts. Compassion and harshness have their place in the service of God and we are expected to work on, and use, both these emotions appropriately.

#### ABRAHAM'S DEEDS

Based on all this, the Vilna Gaon continues, we are able to understand a verse in Genesis 22:12 which states that at the binding of Isaac (the *Akeida*), the angels said to Abraham that they "now know he has the fear of God." Albeit that the *Akeida* was the hardest test, yet why only at this stage did the angels "realize" that Abraham is a righteous person? Surely this was evident from the hospitality and kindness that he demonstrated earlier!

The Vilna Gaon points out that although Abraham did perform righteous deeds, as far as the angels were concerned, his actions may have stemmed from a natural instinct to do kindness. At the final test of the *Akeida*, however, when Abraham was commanded to slaughter his youngest, most beloved son (a truly harsh and cruel act that he would naturally never have dreamed of doing), he set out to act with all his mind, heart and soul, because God commanded him. It is this mastering and channeling of his emotions, for the sake of God, that confirmed to

the angels how righteous and God-fearing Abraham really was.

May we all be blessed to master the art of balance, demonstrating compassion whenever possible, and harshness whenever necessary. May we merit living a long and productive life, deserving of God's protection as a mother bird protects her young.

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