

## Avraham returned to his young men... and Avraham stayed at Be'er Sheva. (22:19)

The Torah informs us that following the *Akeidah*, Avraham *Avinu*, made an about face and returned home with the two lads - assistants (Eliezer and Yishmael) who had accompanied him and Yitzchak *Avinu* on this momentous journey. Four people left – three people returned. Where was Yitzchak? *Targum Yonasan* explains that the future Patriarch, who was prepared to relinquish his life for Hashem, seems missing from the equation. Apparently, Avraham had sent his primary son to Shem ben Noach to study in his *yeshivah*. Yitzchak spent the next three years studying Torah from Shem.

This directive begs elucidation. Why did Yitzchak require a change of venue, indeed, *galus*, exile, to Shem's *yeshivah*. Was Avraham's Torah insufficient for guiding Yitzchak on the correct path? Avraham seems to have appropriately prepared Yitzchak for his mission in life. To achieve *Olah Temimah*, perfect sacrifice, status is not a simple achievement. Certainly, Avraham's educational abilities were as good as those of Shem. The Torah that Avraham taught was the epitome of *Toras chesed*. How did it differ from the Torah taught by Shem?

*Horav Moshe Tzvi Neriah, zl*, cites *Chazal* and early commentators who identify Avraham's distinctive method of teaching Torah through the medium of outreach to the masses, to the point that he even published manuscripts explaining the fallacies of idol-worship and the existence of one Supreme Creator (*Rambam Hilchos Avodah Zarah* 1:5). Shem, in contrast, maintained his *yeshivah* for those unique highly-motivated seekers of truth. Avraham went into the streets and preached to the masses. Shem remained ensconced in his cubicle and worked with those who came to him.

Clearly, during all the years that Yitzchak was home, he was the repository of his father's *derech*, method, of teaching. He would one day assume the position of mentor to the world. As such, his father taught and prepared him for that moment in which he would transition into Patriarchal status, when the baton of leadership would pass on to him. This was the case until the *Akeidah*, when Avraham observed the spiritual plateau to which Yitzchak rose; when he saw him achieve the apex of *yiraah* and *ahavah*, awe and love, of Hashem. When his unequivocal faith to the Almighty burst forth, Avraham realized that Yitzchak was no longer the same Yitzchak that had departed with him three days earlier. Yitzchak was no longer the person to reach out to the masses. His level of *avodas HaKodesh*, service to the Almighty, was not something that could be inculcated into just anyone. It was for *yechidei segulah*, unique individuals, who had achieved a lofty spiritual plateau and sought to grow higher and better. Thus, Avraham decided that his son needed to change *yeshivos*, to transition into the *derech* which Shem promoted. His *yeshivah* was not for "everyone." Indeed, later on (when Yitzchak came to greet his *kallah*, Rivkah *Imeinu*), the future Patriarch could be found secluded in Be'er Lachai Ro'ie. Until now, he had served Hashem through the medium of *ahavah*; it was now time to transition to the lofty plane of *yiraah*.

*Kiruv richokim*, outreach to the unaffiliated, requires intense commitment, extraordinary love and a heavy dose of common sense. Rarely does a “one size fits all” approach work successfully. The expert outreach professionals who succeed in their field are individuals who innovate and devote themselves caringly and lovingly to their work and to their charges. Clearly, every culture, every environment -- both geographically and societal-- presents their individual challenges, but through deft skills and dedication, one can successfully maneuver himself to surmount them.

*Horav Yitzchak David Grossman, Shlita*, is such an individual, who, through his life's work, has saved thousands of young unaffiliated and alienated men and women from both physical and spiritual disaster. While every person/situation is different, his approach from day one has always been: to attempt to understand the person whom he is trying to win over; neither threaten nor castigate; sympathize, care and show love; and, above all, be sincere. These are the ingredients that often spell the difference between success and failure with regard to outreach.

When *Rav Grossman* arrived in Migdal HaEmek, the city which he almost singlehandedly transformed, he discovered that many of the stores were open on *Shabbos*. He figured that taking on all the stores at once would be a lesson in futility. He would begin with the popular restaurant that was near his *shul*. He entered the restaurant *Minchah* time on *Erev Shabbos* to see an establishment filled with young men and women playing games, listening to music and engaged in various other acts of *chillul Shabbos*. Most of them adhered to the Sephardic custom of calling out *B'oi Kallah*, “Welcome, Bride,” in reference to the *Shabbos* Queen, who was soon to make her appearance. All this was done amidst flagrant *chillul Shabbos*. A lesser person would have cringed or even shouted out at them for their hypocrisy.

*Rav Grossman* reminded himself of a similar incident which had occurred with *Horav Aryeh Levin, zl*, who fruitlessly attempted to convince a barber to close his shop for *Shabbos*. Finally, with no other recourse, *Rav Aryeh* took a seat near the shop's entrance, hoping that his presence would inspire the customers to return home and observe *Shabbos*. The potential customers demurred from entering the shop out of embarrassment in front of *Rav Aryeh*. He would do the same, hoping that he, too, would succeed in closing the door. Within a few weeks, the barber noticed that his business was suffering due to *Rav Aryeh's* intervention. In due time, other barbers closed their shops prior to *Shabbos*.

*Rav Grossman* entered the restaurant and was overwhelmed with the cacophony of sound, the clinking of beer bottles and the calling out of *B'oi Kallah*. Alas, welcoming the *Shabbos* bride in such a manner defamed it. Clearly, these young men and women were clueless concerning the meaning of *Shabbos*, its sanctity as an integral aspect of Judaism. *Rav Grossman* was in a quandary. This group was not open to a lecture on *Shabbos*. They would ignore him, laugh at him, or throw him out. Unless he showed that he respected them despite their present alienation from religion, he was wasting his time. He decided on a brilliant ploy. He walked into the center of the room and recited the final verse of *Ashrei* – *Va'anchnu neva'reich Kah mei atah v'ad olam Hallelukah*. Without waiting for anyone to react, he immediately commenced with *Kaddish*,

*Yisgadal v'yiskadash Shmei Rabba!* Immediately everyone in the restaurant screamed out, “*Amen*” at the appropriate place.

As soon as he concluded *Kaddish*, he began *Shemoneh Esrai*, followed by *Chazaras Ha'Shatz*, the repetition of the Prayer. When it was time for *Kedushah*, everyone participated. He finished *Minchah*, and, while he had their attention, he called out, “*Chevrah, Shabbos Kodesh! Shabbos Kodesh! Holy Shabbos!*” He had their attention, and he followed up with an insightful story. Needless to say, *Rav* Grossman had caused a stir, which became a movement that catalyzed the return to religion for these and other young people. He was unable to convince them to come to *shul*, so he brought the *shul* to them – and others, as he went from restaurant to restaurant to *daven* with the customers. He understood them; he respected them. They, in turn, realized that he sincerely cared for them. This brought about their “homecoming” to *Yiddishkeit*.