

PARSHAS VAYEIRA – SHLOMO STAHL

Alert Responses - Alternative Reactions - Against Routine (Vayero)

(Adapted from notes of a sicha of R' Gedalya Eisman, zt'l, Yeshivas Kol Torah, Yerushalayim, 5732)

There are a number of examples in these sedros where we are shown that a course of action (or *mido*) that is correct at one time and in a certain context may not be correct at another time and in a different context. One should therefore not stick to habit or routine (*shigro*) thinking that what was good last time will automatically be good again next time. Instead one needs to be alert to changing circumstances and react accordingly.

One example is when Hashem decides to inform Avrohom of his plans for Sedom. He does this because "he (Avrohom) will instruct his children and household ... to keep Hashem's way and do charity and justice (*Tzeddoko u'Mishpot*)". Asks the Chofetz Chaim - charity is going beyond the letter of the law; justice is keeping to the letter of the law. So which is it? Is he going beyond, or is he keeping to the letter of the law? He answers that there is a difference between giving and taking. We give with *Tzeddoko* and *chessed*, with kindness and compassion – but we take with justice - only that which we are entitled to and no more. Hence Avrohom Avinu served the messengers three tongues in mustard - slaughtering a cow for each tongue - giving with extreme generosity!!! Yet towards himself he allows no slacking. This is the third day since his Milo, he must have been in great pain, yet he allows himself no rest, but is up and about seeking guests.

There are four further occasions where Avrohom Avinu demonstrates his ability to override his normal reaction, his natural instinct, his life goals.

- When Hashem commands him "*Lech L'cha*" leave your father's house, it was a tremendous trial for him, for he will be derided for neglecting his elderly father and his reputation for immense compassion and *chessed* will be questioned. Nevertheless, he overrides his normal response and fulfils the command of Hashem.
- Similarly when Lot's shepherds steal and a conflict arises. Avrohom had worked hard to draw people into his household and to serve Hashem – especially his nephew, Lot. Yet again he overrides his normal response, upholds correct conduct, and takes leave of Lot.
- Finally when Hashem advises him to send Yishmael out the house, and again when He commands him to bring Yitzchok as an offering. Avrohom loved both his sons dearly and now faced the prospect of the loss of his continued lineage, which he had longed for so much. Yet his obedience to the will of Hashem overrides his natural love and his lifelong ambition.

Finally we see this with Hashem Himself. Everything we have is from Hashem and yet we constantly insult Him by not doing as we should, yet He is forgiving and overlooks this. (*Mi Keil Komocha, noise u'von v'over al pasha*) Yet when it comes to the feelings of others Hashem is sensitive and un-forgiving. He asks Avrohom. "why did Sara laugh (ie. doubt) saying shall I indeed bear a child, when I am old" changing what she had really said "my husband is old". Again we are taught to be alert – different approaches in different circumstances.

We the B'nei Yiroel are children of the Avos. We are entrusted with upholding their ways and continuing in the path they have shown us. Their achievements are not only examples, but a family tradition and a standard expected of us. We must not stick to routine or habit – but be alert to change, and adapt to suit the circumstances.