

# Fascinating INSIGHTS

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## [A Helpful Experience](#)

One reason we may go through a trouble is in order to help others when they are in that trouble. One may go through financial difficulties and then become wealthy.<sup>1</sup> When the poor now come to him, he can be more sympathetic and help them out. One who loses a relative can be more sensitive to another who had this occur.<sup>2</sup>

It was because of this that Avraham was told לך לך—to be a wanderer—as he would now know how it feels to be a guest and the like. This would compel him to help those in a similar situation. Due to this he became the pillar of kindness that he was.

The Chernobyl Rebbe, the Meor Einayim, was once imprisoned where he endured much suffering. After being released, he became more involved in פדיון שבויים in which many times he was able to get prisoners released from prison. This was because he actually felt the pain of those imprisoned since he was once in that situation.

A person in Eretz Yisrael who was a Nobel Prize winner in mathematics lost his child during his lifetime and was inconsolable. During the Shiva R' Gustman<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It has been said, "You aren't wealthy until you have something money can't buy."

<sup>2</sup> It doesn't have to be a big trouble. People may ask you for a ride. Remember the times when you didn't have a car and had to rely on others.

<sup>3</sup> In his youth he was known as an *illui* (genius) and learned with his Chavrusa R' Chaim Shmuelevitz in Grodno. In the Grodno Yeshiva he learned from R' Shimon Shkop. R' Gustman was a rav, and the last dayan (rabbinic judge) in Vilna during World War Two. After the war he moved to the United States and headed a Yeshiva in Brooklyn, New York. In 1971, he immigrated to Eretz Yisrael, where he established the *Netzach Yisrael - Vilna Ramiles* Yeshiva in Yerushalayim. On Thursday afternoons he gave an open, high-level shiur in the yeshiva, attended by rabbis, intellectuals, religious court judges, a Supreme Court justice and various professors.

(1908-1991) came, and the two men cried together. After he left, the man said that R' Gustman was the only one that was able to comfort him. He explained because R' Gustman's only son was killed by the Nazis. The fact that someone else was in that situation and was able to relate to him gave this man comfort that no one else was able to. R' Gustman also told him, "My son didn't merit burial in Eretz Yisrael while yours did merit burial in Eretz Yisrael."

So, we must remember the difficult times we endured when we see others going through similar. Then we will be filled with compassion and help them. Hashem wanted traits of kindness, mercy, and righteousness in the world. He therefore chose us as a nation since we were slaves. Through slavery we can understand the downtrodden. In this way we can grasp, ואהבתם את הגר כי גרים הייתם בארץ מצרים, you should love the convert because you were strangers in Mitzrayim.<sup>4</sup>

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## [Caring Kiruv](#)

Rashi tells us that Avraham and Sarah brought people close to Hashem as Avraham converted the men and Sarah the women.<sup>5</sup> Let us compare this to Noach. It took him 120 years to build the תיבה so that people should inquire. He would say to them that in the future Hashem will bring a Mabul. Through this maybe they will be influenced to do Teshuva.<sup>6</sup> We don't find that anyone did Teshuva because of this. This leads to the question why was Avraham successful whereas Noach was not?

1) When one truly believes in something, others follow along with him. We can hear two speakers give a Torah talk. One may say that Torah is the sweetest thing whereas the other speaker lives it. He truly believes it. It is the second speaker that has more influence.

<sup>4</sup> Devarim 10:19. Also Vayikra 19:34. See Eicha 2:13, Rashi. The Tiferes Yehonasan (Vaera, s.v. אלה ראשי) writes that the reason Mitzrayim didn't enslave Shevet Levi is because Paroh saw that it's from Levi that the savior of the Jewish people (Moshe) will come from and Paroh thought להושיע אינו יכול להושיע, one who is not in the trouble is unable to save. If the savior of the Jewish people doesn't go through the pain of the enslavement then he won't be able to help them because then he can't feel the pain of others! This was the claim of the Jewish people when it says ומעבודה קשה...משה אל שמעו אל משה, they didn't listen to Moshe because of...hard work (Shemos 6:9), they were saying that they have great work whereas Shevet Levi is free from all this so how will Hashem appoint such a leader who isn't involved in this trouble? Moshe also had this objection as he said פרעה...לא שמעו אלי, the Jewish people haven't listened to me so how will Paroh listen to me (Shemos 6:12).

<sup>5</sup> Breishis 12:5, Rashi. This is alluded to by the fact that Avraham was 75 at the time (Breishis 12:4). 75 is a bigger version of 7.5—the midway point between 7 and 8, the natural and supernatural. That is to say, Avraham brought people (7) closer to Hashem (8).

<sup>6</sup> 6:14, Rashi. Comparisons are already made between Avraham and Noach (6:9, Rashi).

Avraham was a firm believer in Hashem as it says *הכיר אברהם את ה' והאמן בה'*, he trusted Hashem.<sup>7</sup> Chazal say *בוראו*, Avraham recognized the existence of his creator.<sup>8</sup> As a result, he was able to bring people close to Hashem. Noach, on the other hand, was *מקטני אמנה*, one of little faith.<sup>9</sup>

2) We know of various Kiruv techniques that work. One that is not recommended is to relate that which is fearful. An example is telling one he will go to Gehinom if he doesn't perform a Mitzva.<sup>10</sup> On the contrary, being inviting, nice, and helpful can have a much more productive outcome.<sup>11</sup>

In his younger years when he earned a living as a merchant, R' Simcha Bunim of Peshischa (1767-1827) would travel to Danzig for the fair. Many non-observant Jews would come and spend the evenings drinking and playing games. What did R' Simcha Bunim do? He would reach out to these Jews by inviting them to join in a game of chess. Through this he would gently draw them closer to Judaism.<sup>12</sup> He pointed out that chess teaches us to be extremely mindful in all our ways, to carefully evaluate every step.<sup>13</sup>

In light of this we can understand why Noach wasn't successful in bringing the people to do Teshuva since his tactic was based on fear—in the future Hashem will bring a Mabul.

Avraham, on the other hand, possessed the trait of *אהבה*.<sup>14</sup> He was a man of *חסד*, kindness,<sup>15</sup> as is

<sup>7</sup> Breishis 15:6. The Stiepler (Birchas Peretz) comments that *אברם* is an abbreviation for *בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים*, see who created these (Yeshaya 40:26), as he connected everything to Hashem.

<sup>8</sup> Nedarim 32a.

<sup>9</sup> 7:7, Rashi. This is of course according to Noach's level as he was a great person.

<sup>10</sup> Although one may not do evil because of this, it won't bring him close to Hashem.

<sup>11</sup> What is the difference between *קיר* and *חומה* as they both mean a wall? *חומה* is rooted in *חום*, warmth. This refers to walls that build and bring unity, as when one brings in others for Hachnassas Orchim, makes his house a meeting place for sages (Avos 1:4) and the like. *קיר* on the other hand is related to *קר*, cold as this refers to one who uses the walls of his house to make a separation from everyone and be isolated. This is why by Tzaraas it says *קירת הבית* (Vayikra 14:37), since he caused separation with his Lashon Hara. This is in contrast to rebuilding the walls of Yerushalayim where we say *חומות ירושלים* (Tehillim 51:20). This is because we need to build walls of unity since that is how Yerushalayim will be rebuilt as it is the opposite of *הגם*, the reason for its destruction.

<sup>12</sup> The Lubavitcher Rebbe would say that the same tenacity, urgency, enthusiasm, and energy that Hitler focused to hunt every Jew down to kill them, even taking resources he needed for the front lines (even though at times he used it to kill just a small Jewish community), we need to use that to find every Jew and bring them back to Judaism.

<sup>13</sup> In her speeches to secular Jews, Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis would say, "You are a Jew. You have created civilizations. You have given birth to every ideal that has shaped mankind. Justice, peace, love, and the innate dignity of man have all had their genesis in your Torah."

<sup>14</sup> See Yeshaya 41:8, Sota 31a.

<sup>15</sup> *אהבה* is *חסד* (Siduro Shel Shabbos 1:4:11. See Zohar, Vaeschanan 262b) and as it says *אהבת חסד* (Micha 6:8).

demonstrated in the episode on the third day of his Bris that he was pained since he didn't have guests. Consequently, Hashem sent him three Malachim in the guise of men. How does he treat them? Lavishly—with three bulls, three tongues in mustard—a delicacy!<sup>16</sup> This is the kind of person and the type of method people are drawn to.<sup>17</sup>

Valentina, who was a non-Jewish central American lawyer, became engaged to Matias, a successful neurologist. Although her siblings got married in a church, she refused to do this as she said, "it's not my place." She constantly would cry, "Where is my place?" Several years after they married Matias decided to volunteer as a doctor in Israel as his father was Jewish and this is what he secretly considered himself- a Jew. Alone for the first couple of months, he would eat at the Machlis house in Maalot Dafna every Shabbos. Eventually, his wife and children joined him in Israel. On her first Friday night, on the way to the Machlis house, she voiced her opinion: "The only thing I know about Jews is that they are gross and dirty. Why are you taking me there?" Matias told her that he just wants her to see what Shabbos is like. When they entered the Machlis home, although Valentina was dressed very immodest, Rebbetzen Machlis gave her a big hug. Enwrapped in the Rebbetzin's hug, Valentina looked up and saw the Rebbetzen's glowing Shabbos candles. She then burst into tears saying, "This is my place!" Later she would say of that life-transforming hug—that's what I needed in my life, a hug! Since Valentina didn't speak Hebrew or English, the Rebbetzen couldn't verbally communicate with her. So after Shabbos, she took Valentina to her Spanish speaking neighbor, Rebbetzen Chana Simon, who taught the Sheva Mitzvos Bnei Noach to non-Jews. After one lesson Valentina told Rebbetzen Simon, "Leave me alone with this! I don't want to learn how to be a good non-Jew. I want to learn how to be a Jew!" Despite the dissuasion of Rebbetzen Simon, Valentina insisted to become a Jew no matter what. Valentina and Matias with their three children remained in Israel and studied for conversion. Two years later, when Rabbi and Rebbetzen Machlis took them to Rav Nissim Karelitz's Beis Din for their conversion, R' Nissim Karelitz remarked that Valentina and Matias were the most sincere couple he had ever met. After this, the Machlises made them their Halachic wedding.

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander Tz"l for close to five years. He received Semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg Tz"l. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of the *Sefer, Fascinating Insights: Torah Perspectives on Unique Topics*. His writings inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. He lives with his wife and family in a suburb of Yerushalayim where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

<sup>16</sup> 18:7, Rashi.

<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, Avraham gives the message that it is pleasant to be connected to Hashem (see Pardes Yosef on 13:3, s.v. *ובשו"ת מהרש"ם*).