

Avraham Avinu is the Persona of Geulah (Redemption)

Avraham Avinu Returns to Eretz Yisroel from Exile

"וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל אַבְרָם לֵךְ לְךָ וְכוּ"¹, 'Hashem said to Avraham go for your own sake etc'. Hashem commanded Avraham Avinu to ascend to Eretz Yisroel.

Every action of the patriarchs was full of significance. "מַעֲשֵׂה אֲבוֹת סִימָן לְבָנִים"², 'the actions of the patriarchs are a sign for the generations'. Avraham Avinu's ascending to Eretz Yisroel is a sign that his children will be redeemed from exile and will return to Eretz Yisrael..

The Exile of Adam From Gan Eden

Hashem created a world in order that we should enjoy the goodness of Hashem. He placed the first man in Gan Eden, the plan being that he would remain there and serve Hashem in pleasure.

Alas, it was not to be. Adam ate from the forbidden fruit and he was exiled from the Gan Eden. There is an opinion in the Medrash³ that the forbidden fruit was grapes. Adam was not permanently forbidden from enjoying this fruit; he was created on Friday and was supposed to make wine out of the grapes to use for Kiddush that Friday night. Had Adam waited for Shabbos to begin before eating of the fruit, the ultimate utopia which is referred to as the 'day that is always Shabbos' would have commenced.

The exile of Adam from Gan Eden is compared to the exile of the Jewish People from Eretz Yisroel.

A Failed Attempt at Geulah

For ten generations mankind continued to sin and therefore remained in an exiled state until it was determined that they be destroyed in the Mabul and that Noach alone would for a second time attempt to bring the world to its ultimate redemption.

Within the Teivah there was an environment of the 'day that is always Shabbos' (as elaborated upon last week). Hashem's plan was that Noach should exit the Teivah into Eretz Yisroel and the Shabbos would continue. A new world would be found, a world of Gan Eden, a world of "שְׁבַת עֵדֶן הַנְּפֻשׁוֹת"⁴, 'Shabbos the pleasure of the soul'.

Where did the plan of Hashem go awry? For the duration of time that they were in the Teivah, all couples were commanded to separate. Cham disobeyed, causing the dog among the animals and the raven among the birds to disobey this command too. Sin destroyed the perfect world order that Hashem wanted to create with this plan

As a result, the Teivah docked on the Mountains of Ararat in Turkey and mankind exited into and would continue to live in exile, outside of Eretz Yisroel. The דור הפלגה (generation of the dispersion) resided in Babylonia, and from there mankind was dispersed to the entire globe.

Avraham Avinu was born in the city of 'Ur Kasdim', (today Syria) and was commanded by Hashem to go to Eretz Yisroel, to return from the exile imposed on Adam.

The Third Attempt at Creation Corresponds to the Third Bais HaMikdash

Hashem made three attempts at creating a mankind that would live a life of Geulah in Eretz Yisroel. The first, Adam, failed with the sin of the forbidden fruit. The second, Noach, failed with through the corruption of Cham.

The third attempt succeeded. Avraham Avinu returned to Eretz Yisroel and ultimately, all of mankind would be redeemed through him. (Although the Seven Nations inhabited Eretz Yisroel before Avraham came there, they weren't considered as having returned to Eretz Yisroel from the exile of Adam. This is because only a Tzaddik can truly be within Eretz Yisroel, an evil person cannot connect to the holiness of the land.)

The first and second attempt of Hashem to create a viable mankind, which failed, correspond to the first and second Bais HaMikdash (temple) which were destroyed. The third attempt corresponds to the third Bais HaMikdash which, we are taught, will endure forever. Avraham Avinu prepared the final Geulah.

The Plan for Creation Succeeded With Avraham Avinu

This is what we quote every day in Pesukei D'Zimra, from Nechemia⁵ " אַתָּה הוּא ה' לְבַדְךָ אַתָּה עָשִׂיתָ אֶת-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְכוּ' הָאָרֶץ וְכוּ' אַתָּה-הוּא ה' הַאֱלֹקִים אֲשֶׁר בְּחַרְתָּ בְּאַבְרָם וְהוֹצֵאתוֹ מֵאוּר כַּשְׂדִּים " "וְכוּ' וְיָכַרְתָּ עִמּוֹ הַבְּרִית לְתַת אֶת אֶרֶץ וְכוּ'" 'You Hashem alone you made the Heaven etc the earth etc you are the G-d Hashem that chose Avram and took him out of Ur Kasdim etc and made a covenant with him to give him the land etc'.

Hashem created a world; a heaven, an earth, and all of their wonders. With what did the creation succeed? With 'you are the G-d Hashem that chose Avram etc'. With the emergence of Avraham Avinu, the creation fulfilled its purpose, Hashem's plan succeeded.

Everything that happened in this Parsha, in which the third attempt of Hashem succeeded with the choosing of Avraham Avinu to begin a new nation, is a forerunner of the third Bais HaMikdash. It is full of preparations for the Geulah that we are waiting for.

Effecting the Geulah Through the War of the Four Kings

In this week's Parsha we read about the war in which four kings attacked Sodom, the country where Lot, the nephew of Avraham, resided, and captured him. Avraham Avinu with only the help of Eliezer, his loyal servant, waged war in order to rescue Lot.

The purpose of the entire war was to capture the seed of Mashiach whoh is a descendent of Lot. The Ramban mentions repeatedly throughout his explanation on the Chumash, that the ancient gentiles were very knowledgeable. They certainly knew that Lot contained the spark of Mashiach and would do anything to prevent it from emerging. Four nations waged war only in order to trap Mashiach because they knew that he will bring the destruction of all evil.

The Four Kings represented the four kingdoms which exiled the Jewish People and tried with all their might not to allow Mashiach to come. Avraham Avinu fought against them, thereby freeing the spark of Mashiach. He thus ensured that in later generations the Jewish People will triumph and emerge with Mashiach from their struggles in the four exiles.

Effecting the Geulah Through the Bris Bain HaBisarim

The Parsha continues with the covenant that Hashem made with Avraham Avinu, the Bris Bain Habisarim (the covenant between the parts of flesh). Hashem commanded Avraham Avinu to cut four animals in half and walk through them, and then to let a bird free. This symbolized the eventual destruction of the four nations that enslaved the Jewish People and their consequent emancipation.

The verse introduces the prophecy of the Bris Bain Habisarim with four words describing the emotional effect of the prophecy, 'אִימָה חֹשֶׁךְ גְּדֹלָה נִפְלְתָה'⁶, 'dread, great darkness, befell him'. These four words correspond to the four exiles; חֹשֶׁךְ is Persia, גְּדֹלָה is Greece, נִפְלְתָה is Edom. The prophecy concluded with the promise that "דֹּר רְבִיעִי יָשׁוּבוּ הֵמָּה"⁷, 'the fourth generation will return here', an indication of the ultimate redemption after the four exiles.

Effecting the Geulah Through the Bris Milah

The Parsha ends with Bris Milah, which is also an aspect of liberation from these four powers which enslave the Jewish People.

At a Bris there are three layers of skin that are cut off, constituting the Milah, and one that is bent back, which is called Periah.

A Shabbos of Geulah Commences a Month of Geulah

The entire Parsha is woven with the theme of the ultimate Geulah. It begins with Avraham Avinu going to Eretz Yisroel, returning from the exile of Adam, it continues with various nuances of the theme of redemption and finishes with Bris Milah, the removal of the four powers of evil. The letters, nekudois (vowels), tagin (crowns on the letters), taamim (cantillation), and even the white space surrounding the letters sparkle with the light of the Geulah.

Because a Shabbos draws its energy from the Parsha, this Shabbos is filled with these lights. "שְׁנַת גְּאֻלִּי בָאָה"⁸ is gematria (has the numerical value of) שְׁנַת גְּאֻלִּי בָאָה, 'the year of my redemption has come' (they both equal 802). May this Shabbos indeed herald the year of our redemption.

Cheshvan – A Month of the Ultimate Geulah

The Bnei Yissaschor⁹ states that in the Month of Cheshvan the third Bais HaMikdash will be inaugurated. It is very appropriate to begin this month with a Shabbos filled with harbingers of Geulah.

This Shabbos is also right before the date that Rachel Emeinu died. She cries about the pain of her children and begs for their deliverance. It was to her that Hashem promised, "וְשָׁבוּ בָנִים"¹⁰ לְגִבּוֹלָם, 'your children will return to their borders', they will merit the ultimate redemption.

It is true that Cheshvan has no Yom Tov, but that is only because it is ready and waiting for the great Yom Tov of the future, the celebration of the building of the third Bais HaMikdash.

We exited the delightful, bright Month of Tishrei and our eyes have to adjust to the darkness of Cheshvan, the month in which the Mabul began. But the undertones of Geulah fill this month, and we stimulate it with the reading of the Parsha of Lech Lecha.

Avraham Chased the Four Kings Until Dan

During his battles with the Four Kings, Avraham Avinu was able to force them to retreat until they reached Dan's territory. The Pasuk repeats this information in two adjacent verses,

"וַיִּרְדֹּף עַד דָּן וְכוּ' וַיִּרְדֹּפֶם עַד-חֹבָה אֲשֶׁר מִשְׁמָאל לְדַמְשֶׁק"¹¹, 'He chased them until Dan etc; he chased them until Chovah that is to the left of Damesek'.

Rashi explains that there is no city called Chovah, the verse is simply reiterating the fact that Avraham Avinu chased them until the territory of Dan where his strength waned because in the future his descendents from the tribe of Dan would erect an idol there. Why is the territory of Dan referred to as 'Chovah', which means 'guilty'? This was due to the idol that Dan would erect during the reign of Yeravam Ben Nevat.

What remains difficult to understand is why the verse had to repeat the fact that Avraham chased the Four Kings in two separate verses.

Mashiach Can Come In Two Manners

Before his death, Yaakov gathered all his sons together to reveal to them the date of Mashiach's arrival. However, he was stopped. The exact moment when Mashiach will arrive remains hidden even from the greatest Tzaddikim. The verse in Yeshaya foretells of the Geulah, "כי יום נקם בלבי"¹², 'because the day of [taking] revenge [from the nations] is in my [Hashem's] heart'. The Midrash¹³ states on these words, "לבא לפומא לא גלי", 'the heart didn't reveal to the mouth'. The date of the Geulah is hidden.

On the other hand, we find in many sefarim (books) years and times when the Tzaddikim said Mashiach will arrive. Even the Gemarah records a date when Mashiach will come. Doesn't this contradict what the Midrash tells us, that the date of the Geulah is hidden?

The answer is that there are two ways Mashiach can come. "אני ה' בעתה, אחישנה"¹⁴, 'I Hashem [will effect the Geulah] in its time; early. The words בעתה, in its time, and אחישנה, early, refer to the two possible ways Mashiach can come.

An Explanation of the Coming of Mashiach בעתה

בעתה is the time that Hashem has predetermined that the redemption must come regardless of whether we are worthy of it or not. The Ramban refers to the בעתה Geulah in the end of Parshas Haazinu, where he states 'There is no condition [that the Jewish People must] repent, etc. only that Hashem will redeem us for the sake of his name etc'.

בעתה is the time that Hashem has never revealed and no one knows when it is.

אחישנה - The Nature of the Dates of Geulah Predicted by Tzaddikim

Mashiach can come before the בעתה time only if the Jewish People are worthy.

The dates that Tzaddikim predicted with Ruach Hakodesh (divine insight) that Mashiach will come were all of the אחישנה kind. Each Tzaddik according to his essence was able to sense that different dates were very auspicious for the coming of Mashiach. If only we would've taken advantage of them and had 'struck while the iron was hot'! Alas, we did not merit greeting Mashiach on these אחישנה dates.

Calamities Strike During Auspicious Times for Mashiach's Arrival

Often, just the opposite occurred. The persecutions of exile became unbearable precisely during the years that Tzaddikim predicted that Mashiach would come. This is because the Satan, fearing his demise, hurried to prosecute the Jewish People in the heavenly court to prove that they are not worthy of the Geulah, and thus they incurred the heavenly wrath.

This is what happened in the year ת"ח (1648), the year that the Zohar predicted Mashiach would come. The Jew's suffered terribly at the hands of peasant mobs in the pogroms of Chmelnitzky, may his name be erased.

The Malbim predicted that Mashiach would come in תרע"ד (1914), saying, "My bones should be taken out of my grave if Mashiach doesn't come". We don't know what happened to the Malbim's bones in 1914, but the First World War started that year. Tzaddikim have said, and every sound historian understands, that the war never really ended. After the First World War the Shomer Emunim Rebbe, R' Aharon Roth Ztz"l, said, "The world will cook like a teapot until the coming of Mashiach".

We anxiously awaited the year תש"א (1941) when the Toldos Yaakov Yosef predicted that Mashiach would come. He not only did not come, but the unprecedented calamity of the destruction of European Jewry began. In 1941 the gas chambers began operating and Jewish suffering reached unprecedented intensity.

Stillborn Births of Mashiach

The coming of Mashiach is compared to the birth of a child. Sometimes, the light of Mashiach begins to penetrate, but then it dissipates; although the child was successfully born, it is tragically a stillborn.

The Gabbai (assistant) of the Shomer Emunim Rebbe related that the Rebbe said that Mashiach would come in the year תש"ח (1948). In 1948 something did happen; the Jewish People established a state, but what a disappointment! Instead of the genuine Geulah, we were presented with a cheap imitation. It was not a Geulah, nor the beginning of the Geulah.

When the Chafetz Chayim was informed of the Balfour declaration, he cried. He said, it's a very auspicious time, but he's scared that the Zionists will ruin it.

We have halachos (laws) of Mashiach from the Rambam (Maimonides). He describes Mashiach as follows¹⁵:

'If a king arises from the dynasty of David, studies Torah and fulfils Mitzvos etc. and enforces the following of Torah and strengthens it, and fights Hashem's wars, then he is a possible candidate for Mashiach etc'

The Zionist leaders were the exact opposite of even the first conditions of even being considered a possibility to be Mashiach; they did their utmost to uproot Torah practice. In history we have suffered from the numerous miscarriages of Mashiach, the Zionist movement being just the latest of them.

However, the Jewish state did serve a great purpose; as a haven for exiled Jews and as a cradle for the rebirth of diligent Torah study after the destruction of the Torah learning and religious practice in Europe.

Although it is by no means Mashiach, we do see heavenly providence in the return of Torah to Eretz Yisroel after 2,000 years of exile.

The Potential of Mashiach being a Stillborn

In the verse mentioned above, the fourth word describing the fearful effect of the prophecy of the exile to Avraham Avinu is נופלת corresponding to Edom, our current exile, which is drawing to a close after two thousand years (speedily, may it be the will of Hashem). Many times in this exile, it seemed that we would be redeemed imminently; the light of Mashiach

had begun spreading on earth when it was abruptly interrupted. Mashiach was a נפל, a stillborn.

The potential for Mashiach to be a stillborn is inherent. In the Gemarah¹⁶, Mashiach is referred to as a stillborn, "ביום ההוא אקים את סכת דוד הנופלת"¹⁷, 'In that day I will erect the Sukkah of David the נפל'. David was destined to be a stillborn. Adam perceived that David was destined to be born without any years and he therefore donated seventy years to him.

(Really Adam was destined to live for one thousand years because the punishment for eating of the forbidden fruit was death on *that* day. Hashem considered the *day* that Adam ate in G-dly terms, and *one day* for Hashem is one thousand years. Adam only lived for nine hundred and thirty years because he gave David seventy years of his own life)

After so many crushing disappointments, we haven't given up hope. "ובכל זאת אנו לכה"18"18, 'Nevertheless, we hope to Hashem and our eyes long to Hashem'. We still anxiously await the redemption.

Avraham Avinu's Battle Against the Four Kings

It was with tremendous self-sacrifice that Avraham Avinu went into battle to rescue Lot, the carrier of the seed of Mashiach. He was one man alone facing the mightiest warriors of his time.

His battle was primarily conducted in the spiritual arena. The night of the battle was the first night of Pesach, the Seder night. He waged war by baking Matzos.

This is explained by the following story:

During the French Revolution there was a disagreement among the Tzaddikim of the time whether it was a good thing for Jews to be emancipated under the rule of Napoleon, or if it was ultimately to their destruction, because they would become assimilated. R' Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the Baal HaTanya (first Chabad Rebbe), felt it was perilous to allow Napoleon victory, for it would mean the spiritual destruction of Jewry. (His fears were later realized for in the countries where Jews were emancipated, they assimilated.)

He fought him spiritually and even sent his students to aid the Russian war effort. However, R' Mendel of Rimanov felt that it would be good for the Jewish People to be freed of their persecutions under the Czar.

On the Eve of Pesach the Baal HaTanya urgently sent one of his students to interrupt his contemporary, R' Mendel of Rimanov, who was at that time baking Matzos saying, "Five hundred Russian soldiers into the oven! Five hundred Russian soldiers into the oven!"

"He's destroying our war effort!" The Baal HaTanya urged his student. "The Russians are being demolished at the front!"

When the giant Og came to inform Avraham of the capturing of Lot, he already found him deeply engaged in spiritual battle; he was throwing the enemy soldiers into the Matza oven. (That is where Og's name came from "עוגות מצות", Matzah crackers¹⁹. Because when he came to inform Avraham of the war, Avraham was already conducting the battle by baking the Matzah).

By Destroying the Chametz before Pesach we destroy all evil and its human representatives. When Avraham Avinu threw dust at the Kings, thus destroying them as the Midrash tells us, he was really engaging in the nullification of Chametz in which we say כל

"חמירא וחמיעא דאיכא ברשותי וכו' לבטל ולהוי הפקר כעפרא דארעא", 'All leaven and sour dough that is found in my property etc should be nullified and ownerless like the dust of the earth'. Avraham decimated the four armies through declaring them the 'Dust of the earth'.

Avraham Avinu Repeated his Effort to Bring Mashiach to the Territory of Dan

'He chased them until Dan', Avraham Avinu waged war so that he could ensure the redemption of even the lowest Jew. These were members of the Tribe of Dan who were always trailing behind the encampment of the Jewish People in the desert and outside of the Clouds of Glory.

The reason the coming of Mashiach is constantly delayed is because Hashem is waiting for even the lowest Jew to be rectified. Had Mashiach come during all the *אחישנה* times we had waited for, there would have been some Jews who would have been excluded from the redemption; their souls would not have been ready.

It seems incomprehensible to us how every single Jew will come to his rectification in the short amount of time left until Mashiach will come. So many Jewish souls are assimilated among the gentiles. However, we know that Hashem can do anything.

דוד משיח בן דוד is gematria *דוד* (they both equal 434). By destroying the kings until the territory of Dan, Avraham Avinu tried to affect redemption even for them. In this gematria, *דוד* is spelled with a 'י', his name is complete; he will redeem the *entire* Jewish Nation.

However, Avraham Avinu was unsuccessful; he weakened upon arriving at Dan. This was a symbolism for the future, of the failed *אחישנה* opportunities for the arrival of Mashiach.

Avraham Avinu then chased the kings once again in an attempt to bring the redemption to the low neshamos that sacrificed idols in Chovah in the times of Yeravam Ben Nevat, *ירבעם בן נבט* is gematria *עד חובה* (they both equal 435). Avraham endeavored to bring Geulah even for him and his generation. Avraham Avinu returned to the same territory where he was unsuccessful and repeated his attempt to bring Mashiach, this time succeeding. *"וירדפם עד חבה"*, is also gematria *דוד* (they both equal 429).

We awaited Mashiach in Nissan and then in Tishrei because the Gemarah says that these months are favorable for the coming of Mashiach. These months were great *אחישנה* opportunities. In Cheshvan, when we realize that Tishrei is over and Mashiach did not arrive yet, we read of Avraham's successful second attempt to effect a Geulah after his first *אחישנה* attempt failed.

We must never cease to hope, beseech and wait for Mashiach.

Hiding the Spark of Mashiach

In Parshas Masei, we elaborated at length and explained the greatness of Sodom. In summary:

After Sodom was destroyed it became the Dead Sea. The Borders of Eretz Yisroel start and finish with the Dead Sea, because of its greatness. It was in Sodom that Lot and his two daughters, the bearers of the original seed of Mashiach, lived.

The reason why the seed of Mashiach had to be hidden in a city as evil as Sodom is so that the Satan, who is always seeking to destroy the seed of Mashiach as it is being born, shouldn't realize what's happening. This is similar to hiding a diamond in the garbage so that it shouldn't dawn on the thief where it is.

The seed of Mashiach passed further down the generations through the two lowliest nations of Amon and Moav, until Ruth the Moabite and Naamah the Ammonite converted and married into the house of King David.

Sodom is the Kelipah (impure force) That Blocks Mashiach

The Gemarah²⁰ instructs that, before we say the blessings after a meal, we wash our hands to remove 'Salt of Sodom' that can make one blind. This is called 'Mayim Achronim', 'after waters'.

The Kelipah of Sodom has the power to blind someone so that he doesn't feel connected to the entire idea of redemption.

The commandment to say the blessing after we eat is phrased in the Torah as "ואכלת, ושבעת, וברכת את ה' אלוקיך על הארץ הטובה אשר נתן לך"²¹, 'You should eat, be satiated and bless Hashem your G-d for the good land that he gave you'. The blessing after we eat is not for the food, it is for Eretz Yisroel. Nowadays, when we are exiled, the blessing after we eat is filled with prayers begging for our return from exile.

Before we beg Hashem for redemption, we must wash off any kelipah that would preclude us from wanting and appreciating the Geulah.

Avraham Avinu destroyed the Kelipah of 'Chovah'

The words the Gemarah uses to instruct us of the obligation to wash Mayim Achronim is "מים אחרונים חובה", 'Mayim Achronim are obligatory'. The Arizal says that the word חובה refers to a Kelipah that is called חובה and that when we wash our hands, we destroy it.

This is what the verse tells us, "וירדפם עד חובה אשר משמאל לדמשק", He chased them to destroy the Kelipah of 'Chovah' that is to the left, it stands in opposition to, דמשק which has the letters of מקדש. Avraham Avinu obliterated this Kelipah in his war for the Geulah. He also begged Hashem that his children be spared a Geulah of 'Chovah', a false redemption.

This Shabbos, which contains the wellsprings of Geulah, has the power to ignite within us a strong yearning for it. We should add to the tears of Rachel our Matriarch who cries for the sake of her children and thereby create a great heavenly cry that it is time for the redemption.

The Power of Names

The Gemarah²² states that in the merit of three Mitzvos that are called 'Rishon', the first ones, Jews will merit three things that are referred to as 'Rishon', one of them being the 'name' of Mashiach, who is called 'ראשון לציון'.

We need to understand what does the Gemarah mean with the nuance 'name' of Mashiach, why doesn't the Gemarah just say that we will merit Mashiach.

The name of a person contains his essence and his task on this world. As soon as an entity has a name, even if it has not yet materialized, it exists by the merit of its task.

There is a story told about R' Yisroel of Karlin (known as the 'Frankfurter') that explains this point. Although he usually hid his greatness, at the end of his life he showed many wonders. This was because he wanted to strengthen the Emunah (faith) of his fellow Jews that was being challenged by the tremendous difficulties of the era (he passed away in the early 1900's).

He once told his followers that anybody whose wife was expecting should line up to receive a name for the unborn child. Of course, whomever he gave the name of a boy had a boy and vice versa.

One man, who had no children and was no fool, went onto the line. The Rebbe gave him a name, but then felt that something was fishy and called him back asking, "In which month is your wife up to?" The man responded, "Right before the first." The Rebbe said, "א שייגעץ ביסטו, אבער אריין געכאפט האסטו!" (You acted unscrupulously, but you nevertheless succeeded).

Once the unborn child had a name, it had to come into being because it had been assigned a task on this world.

The Naming of Yitzchak

There are three people that acquired names before they were born, Yitzchak, Shlomo and King Yoshiyahu. Some say that Yishmael also got his name before he was born. That depends on whether Hagar had miscarried or not when the angel told her of Yishmael's coming birth and personality.

Avraham Avinu did not want Hashem to perform a big miracle for him and make Sarah, who was truly barren, to give birth. He told Hashem, I'm happy with Yishmael; just please help so that he should be a Tzaddik.

Hashem didn't just tell him that he would have a child; he also assigned him by a name. He thus gave him a task ensuring his existence. "אָבֶל שָׂרָה אֲשֶׁתְּךָ יִלְדֶת לְךָ בֵּן וְקָרָאתָ אֶת שְׁמוֹ יִצְחָק", "אָבֶל שָׂרָה אֲשֶׁתְּךָ יִלְדֶת לְךָ בֵּן וְקָרָאתָ אֶת שְׁמוֹ יִצְחָק",²³ 'But your wife Sarah will give birth to a son for you and you should call him Yitzchak'. He exists already; no one can argue anymore that he shouldn't come into existence.

The Tzidkas Hatzaddik states that one mustn't spare Hashem, and only ask for small things. "כִּי אֵין לֵה' מַעְצוֹר לְהוֹשִׁיעַ בְּרַב אוֹ בְּמַעֲט",²⁴ 'There is no holding back for Hashem to help whether it's big or small'. It makes no difference to the ocean whether you take a teaspoon out of it, or a boatload. Hashem can do anything; ask big!

The Naming of Yishmael

Hagar was commanded to call her unborn child Yishmael because "שָׁמַע ה' אֶת עֲנִיךָ",²⁵ 'Hashem has heard your pain'; Hashem cares about the pain of Yishmael. But Hagar never got to name her baby because Avraham named him first through divine inspiration, calling him also Yishmael but for a totally different reason.

The Pirkei DiRabbi Eliezer says that Yishmael refers to the verse of "וַיִּשְׁמַע קוֹל וַיַּעֲנֶם",²⁶ 'G-d will hear and answer', which refers not to the pain of Yishmael, but to the pain of the Jewish People that suffer at the hands of Yishmael.

Retroactively, the meaning of the words that the angel told Hagar, 'Hashem has heard your pain', was revealed to mean, not the pain of Yishmael, but the pain that Yishmael inflicts upon the Jewish People.

Avraham grabbed the opportunity to name Yishmael for the benefit of the Jewish People and the ultimate rectification of the world. Yaakov later followed his example and grabbed the Blessings from Yitzchak, his father, before Aisav could get them.

Eliezer is Hinted at with a Gematria

There are two opinions in the Gemarah²⁷ as to whom Avraham Avinu took with him to battle the Four Kings. The verse says "וירק את חניכיו וכו' שמנה עשר ושלוש מאות"²⁸, 'He armed his disciples etc three hundred and eighteen'. Some say that this verse is to be understood literally, 318 people fought together with Avraham. Others are of the opinion that only one person came, אליעזר, whose name is gematria 318. According to the opinion that only Eliezer came with Avraham, why is he hinted to in this particular way? It would have been shorter to simply state his name.

Introducing the Topic of Shidduchim (Arranged Marriages) With a Gematria

The Torah introduces the Shidduch of Yitzchak with the words, "וזה ברכך את אברהם" 'זה' ברכך את אברהם, 'Hashem blessed Avraham with everything'. Rashi commentates that בכל²⁹ is gematria בן, son, and the verse is saying that now that Avraham had a son, he had to find a Shidduch for him. Why does the verse say that Avraham had a son through a gematria?

The Roots of Shidduchim are Completely Heavenly

Shidduchim are completely heavenly concepts. Tzemach Tzedek זצ"ל, in his Sefer Meah Shearim, states that the root of a marital match is in the very highest of heavens and it is therefore very difficult to bring it down to this world. That is why, in the making of every Shidduch, the matchmaker will sometime during the process, bend the truth a little (or a lot). Thereby, he introduces a bit of a flaw into the purity of the Shidduch and it can thus be brought down to earth.

A Gematria Brings a Shidduch Down to Earth

The Zohar states that a gematria is something that has connection only to this world. Mathematics is an earthly concept only; in heaven the laws of physics, time and space, do not exist. When we reckon the gematria of any subject, we make it more tangible, thereby bringing it down to earth.

By introducing the Shidduch of Yitzchak and Rivka with a gematria, the Torah brought it down to this world, enabling it to be actualized.

A Gematria Shows That Even Two Things That Appear Not To Be Connected Can Really Be Linked Together

In addition, if two things share a numerical value, it means they have a connection to each other even if on the surface the connection is not readily visible.

This is because Hashem created the world with the twenty two letters of the Aleph-Beis. Every creation is composed of the letters that constitute its name. The letters of a persons name are those that his soul was created with. When the sums of the letters of two things equal each other, it hints that there must be a connection between them.

(As mentioned, this connection may not always be apparent, for example: ראש השנה is gematria בית המקדש [they both equal 861]. ראש השנה is the first in time and בית המקדש is the first in place. This was explained in Parshas Haazinu.)

There is a groom in Chevron, Yitzchak, and a bride in Aram Naharaim, Rivka. There seems to be no connection between them. However, gematria has taught us that a bond is not always apparent.

This is why a badchan (wedding rhymester) will endeavor to find a gematria using the names of the groom and bride.

The topic of marital matches begins with a gematria to teach us this.

Eliezer is the Shadchan (Matchmaker)

The reason why Eliezer's name was used in a gematria was to prepare him to be the shadchan for Yitzchak and Rivka. However, we must understand, why he merited being designated to be the Shadchan specifically when he went to help Avraham Avinu fight the Four Kings.

One of the Four Kings was Nimrod, who, the Targum Yonoson states, was Eliezer's father. Going to battle against his father demanded that Eliezer battle his natural instinct in order to serve his master.

It was very against Eliezer's personal interest to find a wife for Yitzchak. He himself had a daughter and would have liked Yitzchak to be his own son-in-law. He had to put aside this tremendous his self-interest in order to be able to be the Shadchan in the most sublime Shidduch in history.

When he overcame his natural inclination and fought his father at the war of the Four Kings in order to free Mashiach, he demonstrated that he was ready to forgo personal benefit in order to serve his master. He then acquired the merit that later he would be able to break his self interest and be the Shadchan of Yitzchak and Rivka and the leader of all Shadchanim that will ever be. That is why it was specifically by the war of the Four Kings, that his name was hinted in a gematria to prepare him for the task of Shadchan.

Eliezer eventually merited being reincarnated into Kalev, to whom the Mearas Hamachpelah, the place where his master was buried, was given to.

We Will Merit the Geulah with Mesiras Nefesh (Self-Sacrifice) Only

Tzaddikim had predicted that before Mashiach comes, even the smallest Avodah, service to Hashem, will require Mesiras Nefesh. It will be excruciatingly difficult to say even one pure word of holiness to Hashem. The Satan will stand by our mouths and try to rip away each word.

It is with the Mesiras Nefesh that we will exercise in fulfilling Hashem's will that we will overcome the tremendous Kelipos of our time that block all G-dliness. May we speedily merit the fulfillment of the verse's promise;

וְזָכַרְתִּי אֶת בְּרִיתִי יַעֲקֹב וְאֶת בְּרִיתִי יִצְחָק וְאֶת בְּרִיתִי אַבְרָהָם אֲזַכֵּר וְהָאָרֶץ אֲזַכֵּר³⁰

¹ בראשית יב:א

² מבואר ברמב"ן בראשית יב:ו מובא מהמדרש תנחומא לך לך פרק ט'

³ בראשית רבה יט, ה

⁴ זמירות קה אכסוף מר' אהרן הגדול מקארלין

⁵ פרק ח', ו' י"א

⁶ בראשית טז:יא

⁷ בראשית טז:טז

⁸ ישעי' סג:ד

⁹ מאמרי חשון א,ב בשם המדרש

¹⁰ ירמיה' לא:טז

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- 11 בראשית יד:יד, טו
 - 12 ישע'י סג:ד
 - 13 מדרש רבה קהלת פרשה י"ב סימן ט'
 - 14 ישע'י ס:כב
 - 15 הלכות מלכים פרק י"א סימן ד'
 - 16 סנהדרין דף צ"ו ע"ב
 - 17 עמוס ט:יא
 - 18 פיוט נעילה
 - 19 פרקי דרבי אליעזר
 - 20 עירובין יז ע"ב
 - 21 דברים ח:י
 - 22 פסחים ה ע"א
 - 23 בראשית יז:יט
 - 24 שמואל א' יד:ו
 - 25 בראשית טז:יא
 - 26 תהלים נה:כ
 - 27 נדרים לב ע"א
 - 28 בראשית יד:יד
 - 29 בראשית כד:א
 - 30 ויקרא כו:מב