

Avraham Before and Avraham After



Avraham, Avraham

The Bas Ayin brings from the Zohar: there was an Avraham before and an Avraham after — Avraham before his bris milah, and Avraham after his bris milah. Like it says at the Akeidah: the malach called to Avraham and said, "Avraham, Avraham" — we're supposed to pause between the two Avraham's. Why is his name mentioned twice? Because there is a difference between the first Avraham and the second Avraham — the second Avraham is not like the first. The second Avraham (post bris-milah) was complete, and the first Avraham (pre bris-milah) was incomplete.

In our own language, we do this all the time. There's seeing, and there's SEEING. You could hear someone — or you could HEAR someone. You could understand, or you can UNDERSTAND. We're saying the same exact words, but second one has a certain emphasis, a certain focus, a certain deliberateness. And that idea is at play in this week's parsha: there's Avraham and there's AVRAHAM.

The Bas Ayin explains, based on the Zohar, that before his bris milah, Avraham was not complete. He wasn't able to nullify himself toward the Ohr Ein Sof, to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, completely, because there was a blockage — that's what the orlah is. He still had his own bodily feelings. But then there was a later Avraham, the Avraham post-bris milah. Then he was in the realm of complete and whole, able to nullify himself toward the Ohr Ein Sof, to be subsumed within the Creator — to make himself smaller, and in the process make himself bigger. And he was able to receive the yoke of living life in this world, of channeling malchus

into this world, through all of his limbs — because now that he had a bris milah, he was so holy and so pure. Now he was able to be mevatel himself and become nichlal (included) in the Ohr Ein Sof.

"And Hashem Appeared to Him"

In fact, this explains, says the Bas Ayin, the beginning of the parsha, where it says: "Vayeira eilav Hashem" — "And Hashem appeared to him." Where's Avraham? It should say, "And Hashem appeared to Avraham." But it doesn't. It's almost as if Hashem was appearing to His own self. What's going on here?

Based on what we just explained: It's true, Avraham Avinu was Avraham — but after his bris-milah he became AVRAHAM, where he was more shalem and able to be mevatel himself and be nichlal, included, in the Ohr Ein Sof. So when Hashem appeared to Avraham Avinu, it was like Hashem appearing to Him — capital H — to HaKadosh Baruch Hu Himself. Avraham made himself so humble, so pure, so holy; he channeled all of that guf, all of the physical, to kedusha, and he made himself one with Hashem. Obviously, he's not Hashem — of course not, we're not saying that. But he became one with Hashem, a partner with Him, nichlal in the Ohr Ein Sof, included in that eternity.

That's unbelievable. There's Avraham — and then there's AVRAHAM.

An Ori Before and an Ori After

My friends, this is a lofty level. But if the Torah is telling us this, then there's a message for us: we have this spiritual DNA in our bones — in our physical bones, in our spiritual makeup. We have

this DNA to become people who can have two names. There's Ori before, and Ori after. You can become a Moishy before, and a Moishy after. You're a different person before you do the mitzvah than you are after you do the mitzvah. You're a different person yesterday than you are today.

Imagine we had this mindset of "Avraham, Avraham" every moment of every day. There's me before I davened Shacharis this morning, and then there's me after. There's me before the coffee, and there's me after the coffee — I don't actually know that; I don't really drink so much coffee, but that's what I hear people saying. There's me before I put on tefillin, and after. Before I was honest, and after. Before I gave tzedakah, and after. Whether it's davening, whether it's learning, whether it's doing business with honesty, whether it's shalom bayis, whether it's a conversation with your children — whatever it might be, maybe even tying your shoelaces the way Chazal teach, the right before the left. When you do that, there's an old one and a new one. There's an old me and a newly discovered me. There's Avraham — and then there's AVRAHAM.

Bringing the Yesh Back to Ayin

The Bas Ayin points out as well: "Avraham, Avraham" is 248 plus 248, which is the same as malchus — 496.

Perhaps, the message is this idea. Every day we say the Shema in which we are mekabel ol malchus Shamayim, we accept the yoke of Heaven, and take upon the responsibility of tapping into תנא, becoming one with the Creator. We are saying: let us become one with You. Whatever it is that I'm doing — whether it's something bona fide spiritual, that looks spiritual and smells spiritual, or whether

it's the most mundane thing in the world — yes, we can become one through that. We can channel this Avraham AVRAHAM energy, and we can become nichlal in the Ohr Ein Sof.

In HaYom Yom, the Lubavitcher Rebbe shares a remarkable idea: Hashem created the world yesh me'ayin, something from nothing. But our tafkid, our avodah, is to go the other way now — to take all the yesh, all the physical, all the materialism, and channel it back to ayin: back to being nichlal in the Ohr Ein Sof, back to being echad, one.

The Torah says, "V'adam ayin l'avodas ha'adamah," there was no man to work the ground. I was thinking, perhaps, the Torah is alluding to this imperative of man, reminding us that our tafkid is תנא, AYIN. We serve Hashem by channeling everything in the adamah — all of earthliness — to the realm of ayin. We partner with the Divine and become nichlal in the Ohr Ein (תנא) Sof. What an amazing opportunity, and what an amazing responsibility that we have.

So, remember this: There's Avraham before and there's AVRAHAM after. There is a me before I do that thing in my Avodas Hashem, and there's a me after. The first one is still tethered to this world; the second one knows no bounds.

My friends, let us learn from AVRAHAM and choose to become more nichlal in the Eternal One. Each moment of each day, may we live beyond the complacent restraints that so often hold us back in life and instead of limiting ourselves, may we strive to become better and holier, finding the deeper part of our true selves.

Have a heilige Shabbos!

— R' Ori Strum

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