

Chayei Sarah 5782
October 29th, 2021



a kid friendly publication of Nageela West Coast Joyfully Jewish Experiences



The Untest

by Rabbi Dani Locker

Go Avraham Go! Go Avraham Go! Go Avraham Go! Go Avraham Go!

I know what you're thinking... I'm writing about a sports game and Avraham is the name of the star.

Nope.

Or maybe you're thinking I'm writing this dvar torah about the commandment for Avraham to 'GO' to the Land of Israel.

Double nope. That was 2 weeks ago.

'Go Avraham Go' is my impression of Satan cheering for our forefather Abraham. I know, if you're looking for fans, you could do better than Satan, but all publicity is good publicity, right?

The talmud (BB 16b) retells a conversation between Satan and God. Satan praises Abraham, saying that he had searched the world and had

found nobody more faithful to God than Abraham. What special act did Abraham do to induce this kind of praise? Was it his willingness to leave his home? Sacrifice his son? Endure generations of 'he brews it' jokes?

Nope.

Here's what was so impressive. He paid for his wife's burial place.

Well, that doesn't sound too impressive.

He paid for his wife's burial place, even though God had already promised him the land! So Abraham gets over-

charged by Efron, the land seller, for purchasing his own land! That is frustrating, and yet Abraham-



Candle lighting

- Scottsdale 5:19
- Henderson 5:29
- Las Vegas 5:29
- Honolulu 5:38
- San Diego 5:42
- Reno/ Tahoe 5:42
- Irvine 5:43
- Los Angeles 5:45
- Oakland 5:55
- Park City 6:07

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ham happily paid the price without complaint. According to some opinions, this is the final test of Abraham's long list of trials. So... let's get something straight. Abraham is willing to sacrifice his son, among other great challenges. Yet the final, ultimate test is paying for a burial spot? How can that even be counted as a challenge after the massive hardships of his lifetime?

It's hard to recognize even this challenge is from God

You know what was hard about the idea about Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son? Yeah, the sacrificing of the son part. But you know what may have made it a little less difficult? Abraham had received a direct command from God. Prophecy. Clarity. Knowing that you have got to do something tough doesn't make it easy, but there's a strength you can use being absolutely certain that this is God's challenge and knowing what you have to do. Burying Sarah was different. God gave Abraham no clear instructions. He did not say, "I want you to overpay for the funeral." That would have made it easier. Instead, a sleazy land

salesman named Efron was making him overpay. It's hard to have the clarity of what to do. It's even harder to recognize the challenge is from God and not from this greasy guy.

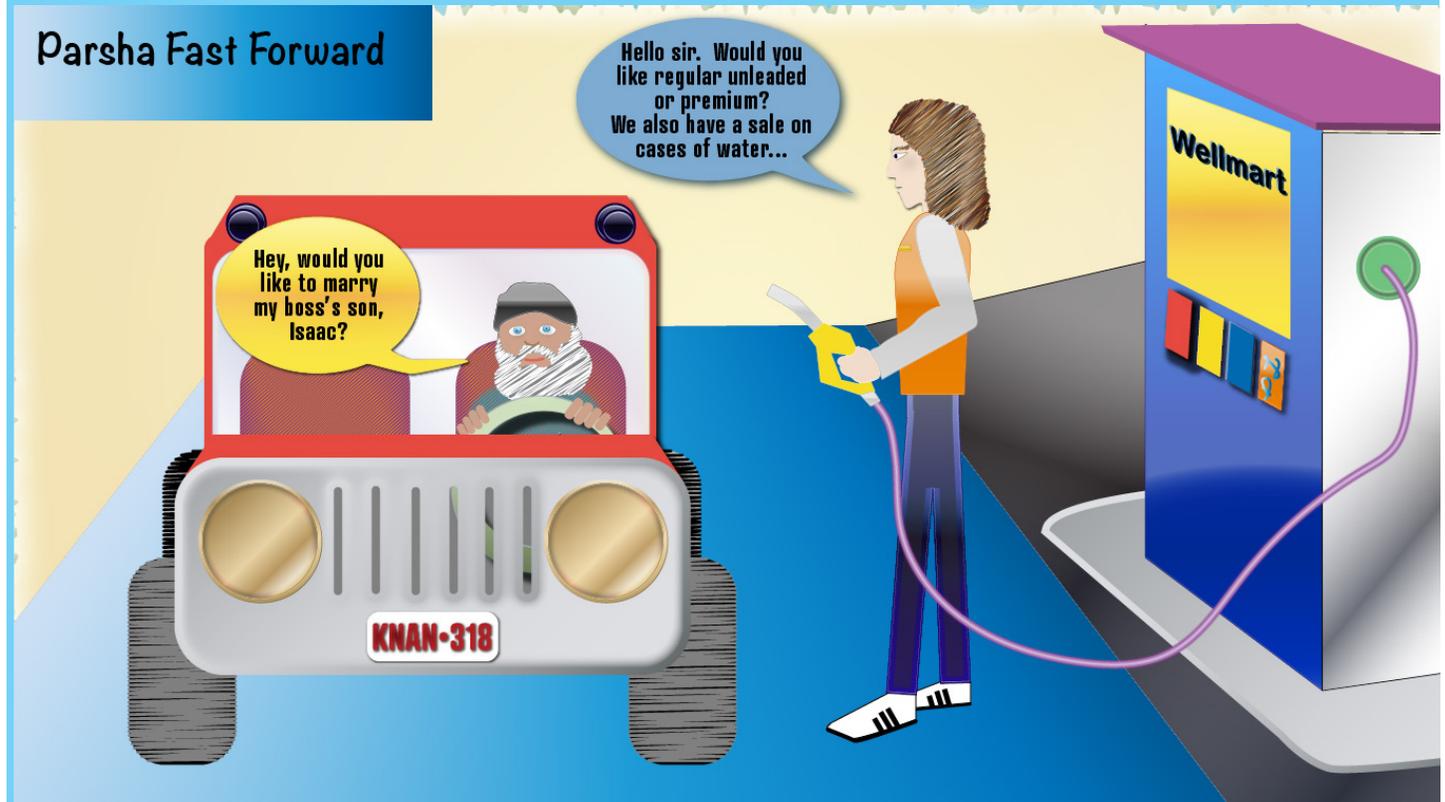
A Rabbi of mine would give this example. People think about sacrificing for God. Like, if the Romans come bursting in and insisted that I bow down to an idol, I would give up my life. What we don't realize is that we're being challenged in smaller ways every single day. Being patient with an annoying sibling might not feel like a test from God, but it is. Returning the extra change the shopkeeper accidentally gave you (what? Coins? What are thoooooose?) might be a more challenging test than the Romans. Responsibly studying for that quiz when there's a really good game on... that's a test as well. Abraham's final test reminds us to pay attention to all of the small incidents in life- the ones that aren't obviously that they're from God, and to make sure we're making the right choices there as well.

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Parsha Fast Forward



Stump the Rabbi is a forum where kids can ask ANM Jewish questions.

Have a question? Please send it in to stump@nageelawest.org

Questions here are real. Names and some wording have been changed.

Note: We call this 'Stump The Rabbi' for fun, but that's not really the point. The goal is to learn something important in an interesting way.

Stump the Rabbi

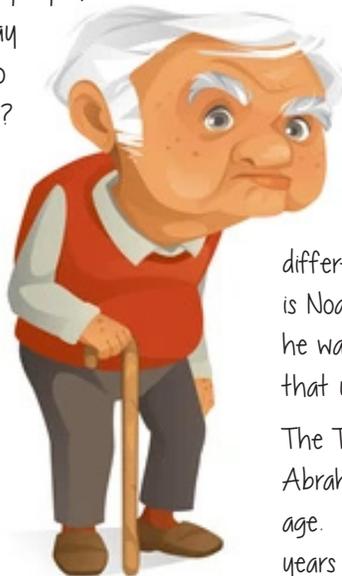


#183 Ageless Beauty

Dear Rabbi,

I learned that people used to live a lot longer than they do now. Some names in the Torah seem to have lived hundreds and hundreds of years. My question is, at what rate did they age? I mean, did they get old normally, and just live hundreds of years as old people, or did they stay young well into their hundreds?

Thanks,
Bonnie Tox



Dear Bo Tox,

It must have been really easy to be rich back then. All you had to do was open a birthday candle store. "Hello, I'd like a cake... Yes, 756 candles... and one for good luck. Do you have Paw Patrol? My little boy would want his candles on Paw Patrol." How big does a cake need to be to even fit that many candles? Fun fact, the oldest person recorded in the Torah was

Mesushelach, who lived 969 years. I'm fascinated by your question, so I did a little research. Even though people lived a long time back then, most people only had children in their 30s, 40s and 50s, which isn't much different than today. A notable exception is Noah, who did not have his children until he was 500 years old. So was everyone that youthful at 500?

The Talmud (BM 87) tells us that until Abraham and Sarah, people did not show age. In fact, though Abraham was 100 years older than his son Isaac, they looked

identical, and people would get them mixed up! Abraham prayed that elderly people should look older. So blame him for your wrinkles. According to this talmudic quote, it would seem that everyone stayed young, healthy and vital until the time they were meant to pass away.

Why would Abraham do that? People work so hard to stay young. Why would he ask for aging? It's like the joke about the grandmother spreading cream on her face, when her young granddaughter asks what she's putting on.

"It's wrinkle cream," she explains.

"It's working well!" the girl responds.

But seriously, why would Abraham ask to age? Imagine that someone who is very ill goes to the hospital to get advice on a complex surgery. The doctors all tell him he needs to see Dr. Johnson, who is the best surgeon at the hospital. Walking into the office, he sees a doctor who looks like a 17 year old. It might be difficult to accept serious medical advice from some-

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one who doesn't look like they have life experience.

The people in Abraham's generation did not respect the wisdom of the elderly. TBH, I might have trouble getting advice from someone who looks young, too. Abraham wanted people to know whom they should be asking for advice, who they should respect, and probably, who would likely have the best stories and the worst jokes. Jacob did something similar. Even after people started looking old, they didn't weaken with old age. Jacob asked for that to happen so that people would be able to give final instructions to their family before they died.

So it seems that the accepted opinion is that even though people lived exceptionally long lives, they stayed young until the very end. There are, however, other opinions. Some even explain the section of the talmud that I quoted above in a different way, explaining that people aged normally even back then. If you can get hold of video footage from the Ur Kasdim police precinct, you might be able to get more information, but for now, enjoy your youth, and respect those who have lived longer than you.

Have a Nageela Shabbat,
the Rabbi



Do you think anyone witnessed Abraham's ten tests?

If they did, it would be testimony.

OUCH! GROAN!

Do you have a better joke? I sure hope so! Send it to dlocker@nageelawest.org

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