

Dedicated in Loving Memory of Ralph and Anita Siegel ob"m.

### The Happy Test

The fire was hot. Very hot. Very, very hot. They had worked forty days gathering wood for this fire. The flames reached up to the very heavens. Where and when was this fire burning? In Meron on Lag B'omer? Hardly. It was in a place called Ur Kasdim, approximately 3800 years ago. Nimrod, the evil king, prepared the fire in order to burn Avraham Avinu, the rebellious "Ivri" who ridiculed idol worship. Our Holy Father Avraham was not worried. He was prepared to sacrifice his life to sanctify Hashem's name. And so, he was thrown into the fire. Hashem Himself told the fire to stop burning. The burnt wood came back to life, sprouted fruit, and the furnace became a lovely garden, where angels sat with Avraham Avinu.

This was Avraham's first test. There were nine more to come. Avraham was sent away from his homeland. A famine forced him into exile, where his wife was taken away from him. He went to war against four kings to save his nephew, Lot. Avraham was then shown a prophecy of the four exiles of his children, the Jewish people. He underwent bris milah at the age of 99. His wife Sara was taken from him a second time. He had to send his son, Yishmael out of the house. Finally, Avraham Avinu was commanded to sacrifice his son Yitzchak.

Avraham Avinu, the first of the Avos HaKedoshim was tested in every way possible, with all types of suffering. He passed all of the trials. We learn about them every year when we come to these parshios in the Torah, heaping praise upon Avraham Avinu. As the Mishna states, "Avraham Avinu was tested with ten ordeals, and he stood firm through them all, to show how great was the love of Avraham Avinu (for Hashem)" (Pirkei Avos 5:4).

The Chovos HaLevavos, in Shaar Cheshbom Hanefesh (3:27) takes a deeper look at Avraham's ten trials. Why do we praise Avraham Avinu? Because he accepted everything that Hashem gave him willingly and with a good heart. As the verse states, "You found his heart faithful before You" (Nechemia 9:8). Avraham Avinu understood that everything Hashem does is for the good. Similarly, we are put into difficult situations in order to react properly and grow from

them. Therefore, we should be happy that Hashem is testing us. It is for our own good.

There is a famous story about a prominent Rosh Yeshiva of the pre-war generation. One of the students left the yeshiva to make his way in the world. He was not able to maintain the same *madrayga* (spiritual level) that he had reached in the yeshiva. He began to slide downhill. After a while the yeshiva received news that the man's house had burned down. What was the Rosh Yeshiva's reaction? "Ah! I see that Hashem still loves him (the former student)!" The Rosh Yeshiva understood that Hashem is like a caring father. He has great love for His children, and treats them with loving kindness. He sends down difficulties to give His children the opportunities they need to grow. An uncaring person would just ignore them and allow them to continue down the wrong path. However, Hashem in His Infinite Wisdom and Kindness, shows His love by testing us. Therefore, we must be happy and grateful for each trial and tribulation. It is a special opportunity to grow closer to Hashem.



### The Ultimate Victory

"Chaim, if four kings beat five kings, then what beats four kings?"

"Avraham Avinu."

"Right. Amazing, isn't it?"

"Yes, Avi. Rashi points this out. The four kings were fewer in number, and they still prevailed. This shows their great strength. Even so, this did not prevent Avram from pursuing them."

"I see. This was one of his ten tests, and he prevailed. The Ramban has a bit deeper explanation, based on the Medrash Rabba."

"Please share it with me, Avi."

"The four kings represent the four kingdoms that will rule the world during the Jewish exiles. Amrofel the king of Shinar represents Bavel, Aryoch the king of Elosor represents Moddai, Cardilomer the king of Elam represents Yavan, and Sidal the king of Goyim represents Edom. Avraham defeated them all. That was a sign that these four kingdoms will rise and rule over the world. However, in the end of days, the nation of Avraham Avinu, the Jewish people, will prevail over them all."

"May it happen speedily in our days."

"Amen."

*Kinderlach . . .*  
*The golus grows darker and darker. The ruling kingdom gains more and more power. We, the Jewish nation, remain small in number. How can we win? Do not fear. Avraham Avinu paved the way. He did not fear the might of the four powerful kings. He defeated them all. We should also not fear their might. When Hashem declares that the time has come, we will defeat them, just as our forefather Avraham did. We can only repeat Avi's words, "May it happen speedily in our days."*

*Kinderlach . . .*  
*Sometimes life seems very easy. Everything comes our way. These are times to thank Hashem for His Kindness and Generosity. At other times, life is not so easy. We are not feeling well, we are hungry, or we are under pressure. We may have to deal with a difficult person. We cannot get something that we want. These are also times to thank Hashem. He is testing us with difficulties. He loves us, cares about us, and wants us to grow closer to Him. Avraham Avinu, our Holy Forefather teaches us how to react to life's difficulties. With simcha (happiness) and a good heart. Why not? Hashem loves you.*

- Parasha Questions
- Why did Hashem not reveal the destination to Avram? (Rashi 12:2)
  - From whom did the Canaanim conquer Eretz Yisrael? (Rashi 12:6)
  - Why was Avram forced to leave the Land? (12:10 and Rashi)
  - Why was Sari taken to Paroh? (12:15 and Rashi)
  - Why did Lot become wealthy? (Rashi 13:5)
  - What were Avram's descendants compared to (in number)? (13:16)