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Imrey Noam

Parashat Vayera

31 October 2026

20 Cheshvan 5787

SHABBAT TIMES



City	Candles 30 Oct.	Ends 31 Oct.
New York	5:36	6:35
Los Angeles	5:43	6:39
Chicago	5:29	6:29

All times PM · Local time

Say Less, Do More

Rabbi Reuven Kuklin



When Abraham welcomes the travelers, he offers very little: "Let me bring a morsel of bread, and refresh your hearts." Just some bread to restore their strength before they continue their journey. Yet his modest words conceal generous hospitality.

He hurries to Sarah and asks her to bake cakes from three se'ah of fine flour, a substantial quantity. He himself runs to the herd, chooses a tender, good calf, and gives it to a servant to prepare quickly. Then he serves butter, milk, and meat, standing nearby to attend to his guests. Our Sages add that he prepared three calves so that each guest could enjoy tongue with mustard, a special delicacy.

Rabbi Elazar comments: "From here we learn that the righteous say little and do much." Shammai teaches the same principle: "Say little and do much."

The Sages find the opposite in Ephron. When Abraham seeks to buy the Cave of Machpelah, Ephron presents himself as generous: "The field I give you, and the cave within it I give you." In the end, however, he demands an enormous sum: four hundred silver shekels. The Sages explain that these were large shekels accepted by merchants everywhere. The promised gift becomes a costly purchase. Rabbi Elazar therefore continues:



"The wicked say much and do not do even a little."

I once heard a beautiful explanation. Every person sometimes feels a desire to do good, and that desire seeks expression. Its natural outlet is a good deed. But there is another outlet: talking at length about what we intend to do.

A person enthusiastically describes whom he will help, what he will study, or the important project he will launch. As he talks, he begins to enjoy the satisfaction that should come only after the work. He may even receive praise for his good intentions

before doing anything. The impulse to act finds its release in words: he has spoken, felt inspired, and shared his plans, and now feels he has made progress. When it is time to make an effort, the original drive has weakened.

Someone who says less does not rush to reward himself with that satisfaction. He knows the work still lies ahead. The gap between what he wants to do and what he has actually done continues to spur him into action.

Shammai's teaching thus gains another meaning: saying less helps us do more. Words are needed for planning, coordination, and recruiting help. The problem begins when talking gives us a sense of achievement before we have begun to act.

Who Said It Was Impossible?

Sarah hears that she will bear a son and laughs inwardly. G-d asks Abraham why she laughed, adding: "Is anything beyond the L-rd?" But why the rebuke? Sarah did not know these were angels; she thought they were Arab travelers! Ramban explains that the rebuke concerned her view that the event itself was impossible. She should have believed, or

said: "Amen, may the L-rd do so" (commentary to Genesis 18:15). A person of wholehearted faith knows that the Creator can do anything, at any moment. Even without knowing whether a prediction will come true, he does not consider it impossible for G-d. He can respond with hope and prayer: Amen, may it be so!

We'll Settle Up at the End

A Shabbat Story
From Otzroteinu

Abraham is speaking with the Creator. What a spiritual height! Surely someone at that level could simply arrange for others to care for the travelers. Yet Abraham himself runs to greet them and serves them. Helping another person with our own hands does not diminish our dignity. On the contrary, it raises us higher. Rabbi Lipa Schweger, a scholar of old Jewish manuscripts, arrived in Tunis on a Friday. Exhausted by the heat and carrying two heavy suitcases, he looked for a porter. Someone finally directed him to a Hebrew-speaking man. "Do you know where I can find a porter?" he asked. "That is my work," the stranger replied. He looked unusually well dressed, but there was little choice.

The man carried the cases to the hotel but declined payment. "We'll settle up at the end, for everything together." Learning that the visitor had nowhere to eat on Shabbat, he invited him home. Rabbi Lipa first asked the city's chief rabbi about his host and was assured that he could rely on him.

The "porter's" home raised new questions: spacious rooms, carpets, and a lavishly

set table. Could a porter's earnings really pay for all this? His host was attentive, but kept postponing any discussion of payment. Rabbi Lipa began to worry: what sort of bill would he receive?

On the morning of his departure, the man carried his cases to the bus. "How much do I owe you?" asked the guest. "Nothing." Rabbi Lipa protested: "You have done so much for

me! I must pay you!" His host answered: "I have just one request. If you meet a Jew who needs a meal or a place to sleep, treat him as I have treated you."

Seeing the chief rabbi nearby, Rabbi Lipa asked him to intervene. The rabbi smiled. "This is Rabbi

Eliyahu Hasid, one of our community's wealthiest benefactors. He realized that you would not accept help for free, and asked me not to reveal who he was just yet."

Rabbi Lipa never forgot that encounter. He fulfilled his host's request, helping those in need even more generously. For the rest of his life, his home remained open to the poor. The account was settled anew each time another guest sat at his table.



When We Hurry, the Heart Awakens

Describing Abraham's hospitality, the Torah repeatedly speaks of haste: he "ran to meet them," "hurried," and "ran to the herd." The righteous act with alacrity. In Mesillat Yesharim, chapter 7, Ramchal explains that delay may cost us the opportunity to fulfill a mitzvah. But alacrity has another power: "Outward movement awakens the inward." Even when the heart feels uninspired, performing a mitzvah with energy can awaken it.

The Chafetz Chaim asked: why did Cossacks, who had spent years carrying out their duties swiftly and energetically, spend their retirement idling on a warm stove? Where had their acquired alacrity

gone? His answer: all those years they had really been running toward the stove. Their duties were a burden; they wanted only to finish and return to rest.

An action's influence thus depends on the desire behind it. When someone wants to serve G-d but struggles with sluggishness, acting promptly expresses and strengthens that good desire. But when he hurries only to finish and be rid of an obligation, his speed expresses a wish to escape it. The question is not only how fast we move, but what we are running toward.