



The "Eshel" Business

Shaya, I have a great business proposition for you."

"Eli, this is really *min ha'shomayim* (from heaven). My store is not doing so well these days. I could use a new enterprise. What is your offer? Stocks? Real estate? Wholesale goods? Jewelry and furs?"

"None of these. I have a much better proposition. It's called the 'Eshel' business."

"Eshel"? What's that? A new brand of super-computer?"

"No. It's very simple. The Hebrew word 'Eshel', *aleph, shin, lamed*, is an acronym for the words '*achila*' (eating), '*shtiya*' (drinking), '*lina*' (sleeping). You simply welcome guests into your home, and give them food, drink, and accommodations."

"Then you hit them with a big bill afterwards and rake in the profits. That's brilliant. I'll be rich in no time. Thank you for the idea Eli. Bye."

"Wait a minute, Shaya. You've got it all wrong. You don't charge them anything."

"Nothing!?! What kind of a business is that? You lose money! Food is expensive. Serving people takes time. Time is money. Let's be serious, Eli."

"I am serious Shaya. 'Eshel' is a great business. It has been proven to reap great profits way above the time and money invested."

Proven? When? Where? Can you show me the proof?"

"The Gemora (Bava Metzia 86b) speaks about Avraham Avinu. He welcomed the heavenly angels into his home. He served them food and drink. In exchange for these acts of *chesed* (kindness) Hashem Himself provided food and drink to the entire Jewish people for forty years in the desert."

"Wait a minute. Let me get my calculator. Avraham Avinu served three meals. He received in exchange three meals a day for 365 days a year for forty years for three million people. That is over 130 billion meals!!!"

"I told you that 'Eshel' is big business."

"Unbelievable."

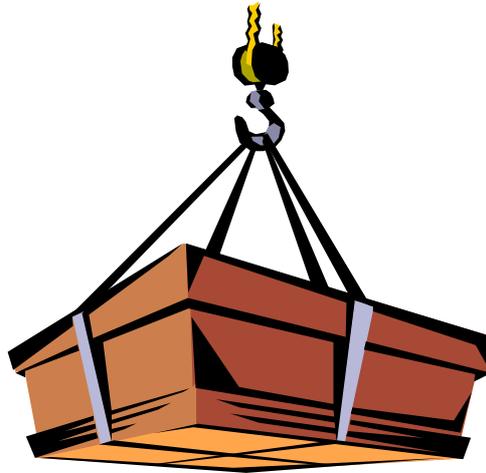
"Avraham Avinu spent his whole life welcoming guests into his home. He served many sumptuous meals to many, many people. The Chofetz Chaim zt"l explains in his sefer, '*Ahavas Chesed*' (3:2) that most of these people were ungrateful and unworthy of his *chesed*. They were not inspired by Avraham Avinu and did not leave their idol worship to come close to Hashem. How did Hashem reward Avraham? He sent the most exalted of all beings – Heavenly Angels – disguised as regular travelers. Avraham treated them royally, as he did all of his guests. This time, the guests were deserving of the treatment, and Hashem rewarded Avraham royally."

"That is truly amazing, Eli. However, even that billion-fold payback is tiny in comparison to Avraham Avinu's reward in the next world for the mitzvah. '*Hachnosas Orchim*' is one of those mitzvos listed as paying 'fruits' in this world, while the principal reward is reserved for the world to come (Kiddushin 39b)."

"Now you're catching on Shaya. I think that your 'Eshel' business will be a real success."

"I'm going to start cooking the meals and raking in the profits."

*Kinderlach . . .
We can all welcome guests into our home. What about your classmate who walked home from school with you? Give him a cool drink and get a big mitzvah. New people in the neighborhood? Show them what nice new neighbors they have. Elderly people, newlyweds, visiting students, and others all need the warmth that you can provide. Open up your own 'Eshel' business. It's been the family business for over 3000 years.*



Go For The Glory

"Is the load secure?"

"Just a minute. I'll check the ropes again. Yes, everything seems to be tied tightly. Start the motor."

The man pressed the button, and the electric motor on the roof of the building whirred to life. It slowly tugged on the long rope. Attached to the rope was a load of cinder blocks sitting on the ground. The winch tugged and the rope tightened.

"Is this rope strong enough for these blocks?"

"Yesterday it lifted a load of fifty cinder blocks. Today I put fifty-one on the palate. I am testing the strength of the rope."

The motor whined, the rope strained, and the blocks slowly lifted off the ground. Would the rope hold? Higher and higher the palate rose. Until it reached the roof of the building.

"Wonderful. The rope passed the test."

"Yes. It is tougher than we thought. The test revealed its strength to us."

"It happened after these things that Hashem tested Avraham" (Bereshis 22:1). Rav Shimshon Refael Hirsch zt"l points out that the word "tested" in Hebrew is "*nissah*". It is similar to the word "*nossah*" (to travel), "*nossach*" (to remove), and "*nassa*" (to carry away). The common denominator of all three words is a description of elevation to a new place. Similarly, a test elevates a person to a new level. It brings out strengths in the person that were previously unknown. By pushing himself to pass the test, he strengthens himself and comes to a new *madrayga* (spiritual level). Rav Hirsch's parable of the rope describes a test, which revealed the hidden strength of the rope.

The Medrash Rabba describes the glory of passing a test with the verse, "To those who fear you, you gave a banner to be raised high" (Tehillim 60:6). The word "*nes*" (banner) is similar to the word "*nossah*" (test). Avraham Avinu passed test after test, rising higher and higher in *madrayga*, like a banner flying high over a ship. And so, his glory was revealed to the world.

*Kinderlach . . .
How do we react to difficult situations? "Oy vey! What am I going to do? I can't deal with this." That is a negative reaction. "This is a test. Let's come up with a plan and make a real push to carry it out." That is the correct way to view a challenging situation. A test is a wonderful thing. It forces us to push ourselves, and brings out hidden strengths and talents. We then rise to a higher madrayga, which brings glory to ourselves, and to Hashem. Kinderlach, pass the test and grab the glory.*

Parasha Questions

- What were the missions of the three angels? (Rashi 18:2)
- What did Hashem do for the sake of peace? (Rashi 18:13)
- During which *chag* did the angels visit Lot? (19:3 and Rashi)
- What plague struck the people of Sdom? (19:11 and Rashi)
- What time of the day was Sdom destroyed? Why? (Rashi 19:24)
- What did Lot do to deserve Hashem's mercy? (Rashi 19:29)



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