

TORAH MUSING GENESIS 19:27

**וישכם אברהם בבקר**  
***ABRAHAM AROSE EARLY IN THE MORNING***

**Rabbi Malchah**

Nissan 24 5783 April 15, 2023

© Copyright All Rights Reserved

How does your day begin? Do you hit the alarm snooze button or roll over one more time? The important codification of law, (שִׁלְחַן עָרוּךְ) the Shulchan Aruch, opens with this: "יתגבר כארי לעמוד בבוקר" one should strengthen herself like a lion to get up in the morning." What did Joseph Caro, the author of the Shulchan Aruch understand about the essential nature of the early morning? What is so important about the dawning hours of the day? תָּא שְׂמַע, come and understand.<sup>1</sup>

Abraham was also aware of the significance of early rising. During three critical junctures in his life, he arose early in the morning. In each of these incidents he had to confront heart-rending, agonizing situations:

### 1. Genesis 19:27-28

וַיִּשָּׂא אַבְרָהָם, בַּבֹּקֶר ... וַיִּשְׁקֹף, עַל-פְּנֵי סְדֹם וְעִמְרָה

*"Abraham arose early in the morning...and he gazed upon Sodom and Gomorrah."*

After the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah Abraham got up early in the morning to survey the remains of the obliterated cities.

### 2. Genesis 21:14

וַיִּשָּׂא אַבְרָהָם בַּבֹּקֶר וַיִּקַּח-לֶחֶם וַחֲמַת מַיִם וַיִּתֵּן אֶל-הָגָר.

*"And he arose early in the morning... and he took bread and a bottle of water and gave it to Hagar."*

Abraham arose early in the morning to send Hagar and their son Ishmael on a dangerous journey to Egypt. This was an agonizing decision but he provides them with meager provisions of bread and a bottle of water before their expulsion.

### 3. Genesis 22:3

וַיִּשְׁכַּם אַבְרָהָם בַּבֹּקֶר... וַיֵּלֶךְ, אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר-אָמַר-לוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים

*"Abraham arose early in the morning... to go to the place that God told him"*

With the intention of sacrificing his beloved son Isaac, Abraham arose early in the morning for the journey to Mt. Moriah. The early morning hours are so completely associated with Abraham that the morning synagogue service (שַׁחֲרִית) Shacharit (dawn) is attributed to him.<sup>2</sup> He had three difficult situations to confront and he faced all of them in the early morning. What did Abraham know about the importance of the early morning hours?

In the Americas, our ancestors must have also understood the essential nature of the early morning hours. The "hush harbors" were *invisible* worship spaces that they created and there they were free from the dehumanizing constraints of their Caucasian overlords. They found freedom and release from the inhumane physical and mental cruelty of slave life through worship and communal fellowship. The locations of the "hush harbor" services would frequently change to prevent discovery, brutal punishment or even death. To announce that a hush harbor would occur that night, they utilized coded language disguised as songs about the afterlife and the morning, such as "*in the morning when I arise*," or "*in that great getting up morning*." These morning services were so central to their mental well-being that they would worship all night until the cusp of morning daylight despite having to return to the fields at dawn. What did the enslaved understand about the importance of the early morning?

During the 175 years of Abraham's life, he had to experience many glorious mornings but the Torah only chose to recount three of them. These three instances were ones in which he had to confront horrific and heart wrenching situations: the

destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the expulsion of Hagar and his eldest son Ishmael, and the sacrifice of the son of the promise, Isaac. Abraham arose and **did not fear**. On the plantations, the enslaved faced many brutal days but they confronted the approaching agony of the day by arising early in the morning to attend the freedom of the hush harbors. The enslaved **did not fear!** Joseph Karo told to us arise like a lion in the morning because lions awake in the dawning hours of the day to hunt prey and then relax during the heat of the day. Instinctually, lions understand that the early morning is the optimal time to tackle the most difficult tasks of the day. Lions, of all of the creatures in the animal kingdom, **do not fear anything!** Like Abraham, the people of the hush harbors and the lion, let us arise early in the morning, not fearing anybody or anything!

### *Abraham Arose Early in the Morning*

וישכם אברהם בבקר

שבת שלום מביתנו לביתך

**Shabbat Shalom From Our House to Your House**

**Rabbi Malchah**

Nissan 24 5783 April 15, 2023  
© Copyright All Rights Reserved

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> תָּא שְׁמַע, ת"ש (ta sh'ma) -come and hear/understand. The Talmud contains many formulaic abbreviations. Ta'shma is Aramaic for "come and hear/understand." This expression is used when a rabbi is quoting an earlier authority in order to settle a matter related to halacha (law).

<sup>2</sup> BT Berakhot 2bb