

Potomac Torah Study Center

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NOTE: Devrei Torah presented weekly in Loving Memory of Rabbi Leonard S. Cahan z"l, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Har Shalom, who started me on my road to learning 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his untimely death.

Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) from www.PotomacTorah.org. Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah. New: a limited number of copies of the first attachment will now be available at Beth Sholom on the Shabbas table!

Before the pandemic, Beth Sholom had a late maariv service at 8 p.m. Monday - Thursday evenings during standard time. Since the start of the pandemic, with mincha/maariv on Zoom, a large increase in our members working remotely, and decreased attendance in local shuls, many who would otherwise have attended a late maariv are instead davening mincha/maariv on Zoom. Some of our members take half an hour out of work for the Zoom service and extend their work time an extra half hour. Since we have not had requests for a late maariv at Beth Sholom, we have not planned for one for this winter. If anyone feels a need for this service (for a yahrtzeit or regularly), contact me at AfisherADS@Yahoo.com.

Chayei Sarah opens with Avraham, age 137, seeking to purchase a permanent plot of land to bury Sarah, his wife and partner for most of his life. With his unmarried 37 year-old son Yitzhak as his only living immediate family member, Avraham seeks a wife for Yitzhak to fill the emptiness of a woman-less home and to provide grandchildren and a legacy for him and Sarah.

Avraham sends his trusted servant Eliezer to his father's home to seek a wife for Yitzhak. He insists that Eliezer not choose a wife from Canaan, primarily because a wife whose idol worshiping family lived nearby would influence her to follow her family's religious traditions. Avraham insists that Yitzhak marry a wife who is willing to leave her family and travel a great distance to Yitzhak's home, where the religious influence would only be from Avraham's monotheism (Nechama Leibowitz and Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch).

Avraham does not have the obvious option of sending Yitzhak to the Old Country to select his own wife. After Avraham takes Yitzhak to Har Moriah to be an olah (burnt offering) to God, he has the status of an olah and must be dedicated entirely to God. Given his holy status, Yitzhak cannot leave Canaan (as Avraham and Yaakov did at various times in their lives).

Eliezer understands and follows Avraham's desires completely. When he prays to Avraham's God for help finding a perfect wife for Yitzhak, Eliezer asks God to send him a maiden who will answer a simple request for some water to drink by giving him water and then voluntarily offering to draw water for Eliezer's camels as well. The key to this test is to find a young woman with chesed, kindness (Avraham's greatest inter-personal characteristic). Because a thirsty camel drinks 50 to 100 liters of water at a time (Google, various responses), asking a young woman to draw water for Eliezer's 10 camels requires her to perform tremendous effort.

Eliezer quickly learns that Rivka's family does not value chesed. When Eliezer arrives, Lavan invites him to come into his home, bring his camels, and enjoy his hospitality. However, the Torah reports that "the man" enters the house, unmuzzles the camels, gives them straw and feed, and then water to bathe his feet and the feet of the men with him. Throughout the narrative, the Torah refers to Eliezer as "the man." The Torah thus reports that Lavan invites Eliezer into his father's home – but Eliezer has to do all the chores of setting his camels and other servants by himself, without any help from Lavan or his staff. Lavan speaks for a home without any chesed. The fact that Rivka exhibits extreme chesed when she comes from such a home tells Eliezer that she is an exceptional young woman, one who embodies the best qualities of Avraham. When Eliezer tells Rivka's family about his mission and experiences, he emphasizes Avraham's extreme wealth, states that Avraham has given all his wealth to Yitzhak, and states that God led him to Rivka. Although Eliezer's prayer was to find a woman with chesed, Eliezer never mentions chesed to Rivka's family – because he learns quickly that the rest of the family gives no value to kindness (Rabbi David Fohrman). [Note: Lavan's father should speak for the family. When Lavan speaks for the family and takes his father's place, his doing so is another indication of something grossly wrong with manners in the family.]

Yitzhak, who follows his father on a three day journey to become a burnt sacrifice to God, and returns voluntarily with his father, exhibits the same complete faith in Hashem that Avraham has. Yitzhak, however, develops an other-world quality after the Akeidah and may sometimes not easily relate to some other people. Yitzhak and Rivka, however, complement each other very well. Rivka's chesed and outgoing nature (important for kiruv), combined with Yitzhak's faith, fill in the qualities that make Avraham so effective in bringing people to understand one God who represents love and kindness.

A great religious leader understands that faith and chesed are the foundations of kiruv, or religious outreach. These values are what attracted me to my Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, and his wife Elizabeth, fifty years ago. They invited me into their home and showed me the beauty of our religious traditions and the warmth of a Shomer Shabbat life. They were our mentors as Hannah and I met (through Rabbi Cahan), married, and raised our children (with much of their help). The Cahans kvelled when we, our children, and others in their Congregation moved on to shuls and institutions that offered opportunities to study our Jewish heritage in more depth. Avraham and Sarah started this journey of creating a nation devoted to Hashem and His message. With Rivka, Yitzhak was able to continue this process. Jewish families since then have been reinforcing the lessons of faith and chesed for countless generations, and with the help of Hashem, shall do so forever.

Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at www.alephbeta.org. Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.

Please daven for a Refuah Shlema for Yehoshua Mayer HaLevi ben Nechama Zelda, Leib Dovid ben Etel, Mordechai ben Chaya, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, David Leib ben Sheina Reizel, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, Dovid Meir ben Chaya Tzippa; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha, Noa Shachar bat Avigael, Kayla bat Ester, Ramesh bat Heshmat, and Regina bat Simcha, who need our prayers. I have removed a number of names that have been on the list for a long time. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah & Alan

Drasha: Chayeis Sarah: Soul Trustee
By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky © 1998

[Please remember Mordechai ben Chaya for a Mishebarach!]

When Avraham seeks a wife for his son Yitzchak, he called no one other than his trusted loyal servant, Eliezer. Eliezer was one of the primary soldiers, aiding Avraham during his battle to rescue Lot. Eliezer was considered by Avraham to be his heir apparent until Hashem informed him of the forthcoming birth of Yitzchak. Eliezer was nicknamed the one who drew and watered from his master's Torah. Simply put, the Torah constantly informs us that Eliezer was Avraham's right-hand-man.

Before sending Eliezer, the Torah tells us that "Avraham told his servant, the elder of his household, who was in complete charge of every one of Avraham's possessions, to swear that he would not take a girl from Canaan for Yitzchak. Eliezer swore in the name of Hashem, the Master of the heaven and the earth" (cf. Genesis 24:3).

Avraham instructed his most trusted aid to get the proper shidach (mate) for Yitzchak. He was to go back to Avraham's hometown. The girl had to come from the right family. She must have been raised in the proper environment. And Avraham warned Eliezer that Yitzchak was not to leave the Land of Canaan. His charge was forceful. He made his trusted servant swear. He used strong language. "Be careful – watch out! Lest you bring my son there!" (Genesis 24:6)

The Torah's reiteration of Eliezer's domestic position in this context is perplexing. Isn't the juxtaposition – the glorifying of Eliezer's position as "the elder of his household, who was in complete charge of every one of Avraham's possessions" contradictory with the severe scrutiny and pressure that Avraham placed on him in reference to Yitzchak's matrimonial requirements? If Avraham trusted Eliezer for his entire worldly possessions, why did he make him swear in this instance? And if he had to swear in regard to Yitzchak, then why define him here as "the elder of his household, who was in complete charge of every one of Avraham's possessions"? Isn't the fact that he had to swear, obvious evidence that he, in fact, was not in charge?

Rabbi Yisrael Lipkin of Salant, the founder of the mussar movement, once stayed at an inn. The inn was quite crowded and the innkeeper realized that he was low on meat. Seeing a distinguished and pious-looking Jew with a beard, the innkeeper approached Reb Yisrael.

"Are you perhaps a shochet? You see, I am running low on meat and I must slaughter a cow." Reb Yisrael was taken aback. "I would love to help," he stammered, "but unfortunately I am not a ritual slaughterer."

The next morning Rabbi Lipkin approached the innkeeper. "I have a tremendous business opportunity. If you were to invest a few hundred rubles with me, I can guarantee a nice return."

The man looked quizzically at the rabbi. "Reb Yid," he stammered. "I hardly know you! How do you expect me to invest with you? Give me a few references, and as many days, and let me check out the deal in its entirety. Then we can meet and I'll make my decision."

"Aha!" Exclaimed the great mussar luminary. "Just yesterday, you were about to trust me with the ritual slaughter of your cow. You were going to feed your guests with that meat based on the appearance of my frock and beard. Nevertheless, you would not invest a few rubles on those same grounds. Shouldn't one treat his spiritual skepticism on the same level as his financial uncertainties?"

The Be'er Mayim Chayim explains: the Torah specifically states, in the context of Avraham's admonitions, that Eliezer "was the elder of Avraham's household, who was in complete charge of every one of Avraham's possessions."

When buying stocks and bonds, when investing in real estate, when purchasing appliances or furniture, Eliezer had free reign. Yet when it came to Yitzchak's future that esteem was not enough. Avraham made Eliezer swear in the name of Hashem that he would bring a suitable wife for Yitzchak. Avraham's concern for spirituality and his future were by no means on the same level as those he had for his mundane needs. True, Eliezer was in complete charge of every one of Avraham's possessions. But when it came to Avraham's future, when it came to spiritual decisions, even Eliezer was suspect. For when it comes to your spiritual needs, your sole trustee can never become your soul trustee.

Good Shabbos!

<https://torah.org/torah-portion/drasha-5759-chayeisarah/>

Was Rivka a Feminist?

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2021

That question is, of course, anachronistic. A close reading of this week's parsha and later parashot, however, reveals that Rivka's marriage to Yitzchak — as well as Rachel and Leah's marriages to Yaakov, and most likely Sarah's marriage to Avraham — brought into the Jewish family a woman's voice and role that might otherwise have been absent.

Society then, as now, was patriarchal. That is to say, the family structure and the lineage was defined in terms of fathers and sons. The very grouping of "Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaaov" reflects this model, as does the way the Torah regularly refers to the family grouping as *beit av*: the father's household. Paden Aram, Avraham's birthplace, stands out as an exception to this rule. The story of Rivka and Avraham's servant reveals that a different societal structure was in place: a matriarchy rather than a patriarchy.

A matriarchy is a society whose family structure is defined in terms of the mother, not the father. The benefit of this structure is that it is always known who the mother of a child is. A man's identity as the father is just assumed. In fact, the original insight into this reading of the text came from scholar Nancy Jay in her book *Throughout Your Generations Forever*, which explores how patriarchal societies developed rituals to reinforce the identity of the father and his connection to his presumed son.

To be clear: Women do not wield the power, even in a matriarchy. That was a role reserved for the men. The male authority of the household, however, was not the father but a (maternal) brother. The mother, as head of the household, did have a voice and exert influence, however.

Where do we see examples of that powerful female voice in the story of Rivka and Avraham's servant?

The most obvious one occurs when Rivka runs back to her family to tell of her encounter: "And the girl ran and told to her mother's household these things" (Gen. 24:28). Rashi, bothered by the unusual phrase "mother's household," interprets the verse to be referring, literally, to the physical house of Rivka's mother. He comments: "For daughters confide only in their mothers." Of course, had the phrase been "her father's household," we would have unquestionably understood it to be referring not to the physical house of her father, but to the members of her family, of the household headed by her father. The term "mother's household" should be understood no differently: Rivka ran back and told the news to her family — that is, to the members of the household headed by her mother. A society built around a "mother's household" as its family unit is the very definition of a matriarchy.

This matriarchal structure also emerges from the verses where the Torah describes a person's lineage. The classic phrase used is "X (a man) holid — sired, or causes to be born Y (his son)." Indeed, this is exactly how next week's parsha begins: "These are the generations of Yitzchak, son of Avraham; Avraham sired Yitzchak" (25:19). Here, however, things are described differently. Rivka is described as "the daughter of Beutel, the son of Milkah which she bore to Nachor" (Gen. 24:24). Milkah — the grandmother, a woman — is the primary progenitor of Rivka, rather than Nachor, Avraham's brother. (This framing also appears in the announcement of Betuel's birth — see Gen. 22:20.)

The implications of this matriarchal structure go far beyond how relationships are described. As the mother heads the household, women's voices matter here much more than they do in patriarchal societies. When Avraham's servant seeks to return immediately with Rivka, we read an astonishing verse. "And her brother and mother said...Let us call the girl and ask her what is her desire" (Gen. 24:55-7). First, it must be noted that the ones who are speaking and making the decision are Rivka's brother and her mother. Her father has fallen out of the picture and might as well be invisible. More shockingly is the fact that Rivka — a girl! — is asked. Rivka's input matters. This is a society where mothers share in the decision-making and where all women, even daughters, have a voice.

By sending his servant to return to his homeland, Avraham was — intentionally or otherwise — ensuring that some of the norms of that society, some of its family structure and respect for women's voices, were brought into the burgeoning Jewish society and family. And while the stories of the patriarchs have, without a doubt, the men as the heads of the family, our matriarchs — from Sarah on down — wield influence and make their voices heard.

In the hundreds of generations that have followed, we have at times sustained and expanded this phenomenon. At other times, we have also dampened and suppressed it. What we will do now, in our generation and going forward, is our decision and our responsibility.

Shabbat Shalom.

<https://library.yctorah.org/2021/10/was-rivka-a-feminist/>

Laughing all the way to the bank

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine * © 2021

Avraham had to put up with a lot. His beloved wife, Sara had just died, and he needed to negotiate with the locals for a burial plot. At face value they seemed to be treating Avraham with great honor. There was a lot of bowing and ceremonious declarations. But after they called Avraham, “a prince of G-d among us,” and said that they will generously provide the burial plot of Avraham’s choice, they actually quoted an exorbitant price for the land. Remarkably, Avraham plays along with their ceremony and façade. In fact, when it comes time to pay, Avraham pays the 400 Shekel price generously, using the type of Shekel that was regarded as universal currency, valued far more than the regular, local Shekel.

We wonder: What drove Avraham to put up with the locals and their charade of make-believe generosity, something close to extortion, and even give them better coins than they asked for?

Rabbi Yeruchom Levovitz (d. 1936) was once walking with a student through a local street on an extremely hot day when they encountered a worker fixing a roof with hot tar. The student motioned towards the worker and said to Rabbi Levovitz, “What an unfortunate fellow... he has to work on such a painfully hot day with hot tar.” As they came closer to where the fellow was working, the man called out to the Rabbi, “What did your student say to you about me?” Rabbi Levovitz explained that the student was feeling badly that he had to work under such harsh conditions. The worker laughed and said, “That is what I thought. You can tell your student not to pity me. I am thrilled to have a good paying job!”

I like to call this concept, “Laughing all the way to the bank.” By that I mean that sometimes we extend ourselves in ways that seem extraordinary to someone else, but because we are getting what we wanted from the deal, we are quite pleased. Sometimes it is a salary that we can deposit in our bank account. Other times it is something else that is really important to us.

I recall a particular occasion when I was visiting a congregant of mine in the hospital, where he was serving as the primary caregiver for his ailing father. The hospital floor doctor had decided that the father had lived long enough and ordered that he no longer be supported with oxygen. When I came to visit, the son asked me about it, and I told him that if the medical advice he is getting from the other doctors is to support with oxygen, he needs to confront the floor doctor and insist that the care be provided.

The son approached the doctor and tried to respectfully explain that the family was requesting the change. The doctor didn’t take well to being challenged and he turned red with fury and began to lash out at the son in a most abusive way. In the midst of his tirade, he screamed at the head nurse and said, “Well they want oxygen for the old man, so give oxygen to the old man.”

The head nurse quickly made the necessary adjustments, and when the son settled back down in his chair, I said to him, “I’m sorry you had to go through that.” He said, “What? That clown’s screaming. It was nothing. The main thing is that they gave my father the oxygen.” A classic example of “laughing all the way to the bank.” He got what we wanted. Nothing else really mattered.

Perhaps that is what drove Avraham as well during this challenging episode. The locals call him the prince, with great ceremony, and claim they will be accommodating. Yet, Avraham senses the greed and decides to pay the stated price in the best coins possible, coins worth many times more than the already expensive price. To Avraham, the expense didn’t matter. Avraham was focused. He wanted Sara to be buried in the sanctified place that Adam and Chava were buried. He

wasn't just doing a business deal. Avraham was creating a shrine for generations. To Avraham it was a great deal worth every bit of expenditure.

Interestingly, the Talmud tells us that from the way Avraham transacted the deal for the land — with money — we learn that Kiddushin (marriage) can be transacted with money or something of monetary value, such as a ring. The commentaries explain the comparison between the purchase of a piece of land, and the start of a marriage as follows. We hope that people will be as happy with the deal they get in marriage as Avraham was with his deal. Sometimes a marriage takes a little more effort, expense, or sacrifice than we had planned on. Yet, focused people are invigorated as they think of the blessing that they are getting in return. Avraham was able to give generously and stay focused on what was important to him. He was thrilled to pay, whatever it would take, because he saw the value in what he was getting. Similarly, we all extend ourselves for the things that are important to us. Hopefully, we savor the value of these priorities so that laughter and joy can permeate our lives whatever will be.

Have a wonderful Shabbos!

Rabbi Rhine, until recently Rav of Southeast Congregation in Silver Spring, is a well known mediator and coach. His web site, Teach613.org, contains many of his brilliant Devrei Torah. RMRhine@Teach613.org

A Three Year Old Bride? Thoughts on Parashat Hayyei Sarah

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

While studying this week's Torah portion, students were told by their teacher that Rivka was three years old when she married Yitzhak — who was forty years old. A student asked: how was it possible for a three year old girl to be strong enough to water camels? If she were so young, how could she have made a decision to get married? Is it reasonable to think that a forty year old man like Yitzhak would marry a three year old girl? The rabbi responded: if our sages say that Rivka was three years old, that's how old she was! There is no room for further discussion.

Actually, there is a lot more room for discussion. And the discussion needs to be on the nature of midrashic statements. The teacher cited above — like so many others — seems to think that midrashic statements must be taken to be factually correct and must be understood as being literally true. Yet, such an approach requires students to accept many strange and even contradictory statements.

In his introduction to Perek Helek, Rambam inveighed against those who insisted on the literal veracity of midrashim, even when the midrashim veered from reason and scientific fact: "This group of impoverished understanding — one must pity their foolishness. According to their understanding, they are honoring and elevating our sages; in fact they are lowering them to the end of lowliness ... By Heaven! This group is dissipating the glory of the Torah and clouding its lights, placing the Torah of God opposite of its intention."

When we study and teach midrashim/aggadot, we must be sophisticated enough to view these passages in their literary and rhetorical context. We must understand the nature of symbolic language and the use of hyperbole.

The calculation that Rivka was three years old at the time of her marriage to Yitzhak assumes that the Akeidah, the death of Sarah and the birth of Rivka all happened on the same day. There is no historical reason to believe this is so. The Torah itself never specifies how much time elapsed between these events. The midrashic statement that Rivka was three is actually a way of saying that she was at least three — but may well have been older. Indeed, the Tosafot (Yevamot 61b, on the words "ve-khein hu omer") reports a rabbinic calculation which concludes that Rivka was fourteen years old at the time she watered the camels and married Yitzhak. Thus even within rabbinic tradition there is a difference of opinion about Rivka's age.

The view that she was three years old apparently wishes to underscore the unusual, even miraculous, qualities of Rivka, just as a midrash has Abraham discovering God at the age of three. There is no way our sages could have known that Rivka or Abraham had been three years old: this was their way of stressing how unusual these individuals were.

No parent or teacher should insist that a child or student must believe that Rivka was three "because Hazal say so." Hazal also said she was fourteen! Midrashic statements are often made to convey a lesson, not to record historical fact. We

should not compel people to accept the literal veracity of the midrash that has a three year old Rivka marrying a forty year old Yitzhak. To accept such a statement is not only religiously unnecessary, but morally repugnant.

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

<https://www.jewishideas.org/three-year-old-bride-thoughts-parashat-hayyei-sarah>

The Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals has experienced a significant drop in donations during the pandemic. The Institute needs our help to maintain and strengthen our Institute. Each gift, large or small, is a vote for an intellectually vibrant, compassionate, inclusive Orthodox Judaism. You may contribute on our website [jewishideas.org](https://www.jewishideas.org) or you may send your check to Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, 2 West 70th Street, New York, NY 10023. Ed.: Please join me in helping the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals at this time.

Reflections on the Tragedy in Pittsburgh...and Beyond

A Blog by Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

Sholom Aleichem wrote a story about a Jewish young man who was conscripted into the Russian army, and was trained how to use his rifle "At the firing line the sergeant noticed Yechiel shooting up in the air instead of ahead; he poured a flood of curses and abuse on his head, with all the worst names for Jews in Russian to boot, and showed him where to aim his gun. A little later the sergeant again saw Yechiel aiming up in the air. This time he was flabbergasted: What, he wanted to know, was the matter with that crazy Jewish soldier? Hadn't he told Yechiel where to aim his gun? 'Yes,' Yechiel replied, 'but there are people there!'"

This seemingly amusing story points to a serious truth. When people see each other as fellow human beings, it is difficult to shoot at them. To engage in violent action first requires a process of dehumanization of the victim. People need to be trained to hate the "enemy," to see the other as a villain unworthy of life.

The root of hatred in our society — in all human societies—arises with the planting of seeds of mistrust, fear and vilification of those deemed as "the enemy." Once the victims are dehumanized, violent action against them becomes possible. There's no need to show mercy on people who are now deemed to be vermin.

Jews know as well as anyone — probably better than anyone—how dangerous it is to become victimized by haters. Once the hatred seeps in, violent words and actions follow. Once people come to dehumanize others, they become capable of acting against them with egregious cruelty.

It is impossible to ignore the growing polarizations within our society today. The level of hateful discourse has led to increasing acts of violence, including the tragic murder of Jews in their synagogue in Pittsburgh by a hate-filled anti-Semite.

This one murderer's heinous deed reflects a much broader and deeper malaise within America—the dehumanization and demonization of people perceived to be the "enemy." We Jews certainly feel the pain of this phenomenon...but so do almost all people who are targets of one hate group or another. There are those who demonize Jews, blacks, whites, Hispanics, Asians, Christians, Muslims, immigrants, homosexuals...the list goes on. Because hatred is aimed at virtually everyone, virtually everyone needs to rise and resist it. Demonization of any one group threatens the moral fabric of society as a whole.

While we grieve the terrible tragedy and loss of life in Pittsburgh, we should also take heart from the thousands of people of all backgrounds who stood strong with the Jewish community. We witness a profound idealism and sense of solidarity on the part of those who refuse to surrender to dehumanization.

Various national studies have shown that Jews are among the most highly regarded groups in the United States. People feel more warmly toward the Jews than toward most other American religious denominations. People appreciate that Jews generally are highly educated, highly involved in social justice, highly engaged in the betterment of society. We

cannot ignore the haters, but we also must not forget those many millions with whom we have warm and very positive relationships.

We cry at the murder of innocent Jews in their synagogue. We cry at the manifestations of anti-Semitism in our land.

But crying isn't really enough. We also have to cry out, loudly and clearly: unless society as a whole can address the plague of dehumanization and demonization, all of us—of whatever background—are at risk. Crying out is a responsibility of all people, at all levels of society.

We need to strive for a society where we look into each other's eyes and see a fellow human being. As Yechiel in Sholom Aleichem's story said: There are people there!

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

<https://www.jewishideas.org/blog/reflections-tragedy-pittsburgh%E2%80%A6and-beyond-blog-rabbi-marc-d-angel>

Are you religious or secular? A Bad Question!

Blog by Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

From time to time, we read about polls taken among Israelis, asking if they are religious or secular. These polls reflect a popular Israeli division of its population into "dati" (religious) or "hiloni" (secular). This use/misuse of terms leads to confusion, and does not serve to clarify the needs and interests of Israeli Jews.

Are you religious or secular? This is a bad question, based on an erroneous assumption that a person must fit neatly into one of the two categories. The result of a bad question is a bad answer. Because of the popular misuse of these terms, people may put themselves into one or the other category inappropriately.

Are the following people to be placed in the religious or secular categories?

1. A person who attends Shabbat morning services, but goes to the beach on Shabbat afternoon.
2. A person who believes in God, is highly spiritual, but does not keep kosher or observe Shabbat.
3. A person who is careless about religious observance all year long, but fasts on Yom Kippur and has a Seder on Pesah night.

I believe that all of the above fit into the "religious" category. They are not secular i.e. they do not deny God or all of religious tradition. They are not fully observant of Torah and mitzvoth, yet they are surely not secular. Yet, they are often defined (and define themselves) as "hiloni."

The vast majority of Israeli Jews identify in some positive ways with religious tradition. A small minority is actually "secular" – living as though there is no God, denying the validity of religious tradition. I would guess that the number of secular Israelis is about the same as the number of hareidi Israelis – perhaps 9 or 10 per cent of the population each. These are the two extreme groups. The masses of Israelis are religious in some sense, and belong more to the "religious" category than to the "secular" category.

What is the value of dividing Israelis (and all Jews) into two separate camps, forcing many to be counted (or to count themselves) as though they are secular/"hiloni"? These categories are constructs created by sociologists and pollsters for their own reasons – but these categories do not serve to reveal the many subtle nuances in religiosity among Jews.

I suggest that the terms "religious" and "secular" be permanently dropped from polls and studies that seek to understand the religious life of Israelis/Jews. The fact is that we do not and cannot be fit into two neat categories, especially when these categories are not specifically defined, and when the public uses these terms in "unscientific" ways. The borders

between these two categories are not clearly marked in the public's mind. Bad questions beget bad, erroneous and misleading answers.

Instead of imposing two categories on the Jewish public, students of Jewish life should be trying to elicit the vast diversity within the Jewish community. They should be sensitive to the fact that a large majority of Israeli Jews have a religious dimension to their lives that is important to them. Instead of blithely writing people into the category of "secular/hiloni", they should try to evaluate the nature of the Jewish religious, spiritual life of the people. Moreover, they should seek to understand that even religious Jews have "secular" qualities e.g. integrate modern secular values into their lives.

Most Jews are religious/secular – not religious or secular. Instead of dividing us into competing groups, we should be seeking a more inclusive, compassionate and nuanced way of bringing us together. Are you religious or secular? That is a bad question. What is the nature of your religiosity? That is a much better question.

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

<https://www.jewishideas.org/blog/are-you-religious-or-secular-bad-question-blog-rabbi-marc-d-angel>

Chayei Sarah – Intended Emotions

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer * © 2021

When the Torah tells us of Sarah's passing, it describes how Avrohom eulogized and cried for his wife immediately upon her passing, even before he had secured her burial spot. We can only imagine the grief that gripped Avrohom at that moment. He had devoted his life to changing the world's understanding of G-d, a lone voice preaching monotheism in a polytheistic world. Sarah had joined him in that cause and they had stood side by side in that effort for decades, supporting and caring for each other with true love, respect and devotion. His grief and anguish at that moment was surely overwhelming.

Rabbeinu Bechaye notes that the Torah says, "Avrohom came to eulogize Sarah and to cry for her" (Beriehsis 23:3), yet it does not tell us where he was coming from. He explains that "coming" in this context does not refer to traveling, but rather to arousing one's self and bringing themselves to act. The Torah is telling us that after Avrohom learned of Sarah's passing he actively aroused his emotions and intentionally brought himself to eulogize Sorah and to cry for her.

This reading of the passuk is very difficult to understand. Why would Avrohom need to arouse himself to eulogize and cry for his wife? Wasn't his natural response to cry for his wife and give her the full proper respect due for such a great woman? What else would he have done when he heard the devastating news?

It appears that Avrohom was not satisfied with his natural response. As deep and penetrating as his grief may have been, he wanted to arouse himself further and to feel the pain more acutely before he began to eulogize and cry for her. He stopped, focused, intentionally and actively aroused his emotions, and only then was he ready to eulogize and cry for Sarah.

There are many lessons we can learn from this simple act of Avrohom. First of all, we can learn from Avrohom the value of intent and focus. In this initial period after Sarah's sudden and unexpected passing, Avrohom's entire mind must have been consumed with his loss. Yet, Avrohom felt that the natural emotional response wasn't enough. He could add more by taking a few moments to stop and actively focus on what he had lost. A few moments to collect and focus his thoughts, actively arousing himself, made a difference.

Yet, even if it made a difference, how much of a difference would it make? How much more grief would Avrohom feel by taking that moment to focus and arouse himself? It couldn't have been a significant increase, but it did make a difference – and if there was more emotion that he could muster, then that had to be done. Even overwhelming grief wasn't enough. If he could add any more feeling into his eulogy and mourning, that was worth the time and effort. Every ounce of emotion he could muster was important.

While we are certainly not on Avrohom's lofty level of spirituality and nobility, we can still learn from Avrohom's example. We often do mitzvos, daven and help others simply because it is natural. We should remember Avrohom's example and

the power and significance of a few moments of focus. With a few moments of focus, we will increase our commitment to Hashem and to helping others, and that increase – no matter how small – is important.

There is another message we can learn from Avrohom's action in this time of overwhelming grief. When one faces such intense loss, it is easy to lose one's self to the grief, and to simply follow our instincts as we try to process the loss. Yet, Avrohom rose above that, and found the inner strength to consider his actions.

There are many times we find ourselves overwhelmed by circumstances and unexpected events. Here, too, we should remember Avrohom's example. Knowing the strength of our forebearer and recognizing where we come from can sometimes give us the added strength we need to hold ourselves together.

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Politics, Religion, and ... Nutrition?

By Rabbi Moshe Rube *

The world has changed.

When growing up, my father said that his father told him that there are two things you should never talk about in polite company: Politics and Religion.

Why? It has something to do with being sympathetic. I don't mean "sympathy" in the colloquial sense, but rather in the sense of stimulating the sympathetic nervous system. That's the system responsible for triggering "fight or flight" when facing a man-eating predator, a terrorist with a gun, or when someone presents an opinion on a topic that contradicts one of our deeply held beliefs.

In our society, most beliefs and opinions about politics and religion we assume have taken up residence in our sympathetic system. So if we broach these topics, our chances of having a meaningful, enlightening, and fact-full conversation go down the more people we have around our table. Even if our intention is to discuss without judgment, our sympathetic instincts are more likely to kick in. We will tense up and wait to shout the other person down, or put a disapproving look on our face – never conducive to a good dinner party experience.

But today, a new field of thought has started to live in our sympathetic real estate. Nutrition. It seems that this topic must be banned from our social gatherings as well. At least I have noticed that when someone makes any definite statement about a specific food's nutritional value, or if a certain diet's relationship to disease is presented as a definite fact, everyone seems to tense up. We're not at the point where a shouting match will erupt but usually a defensive statement along the lines of "that food you just mentioned is bad I won't/can't stop eating." Or "Oh the science is always changing so we can basically eat anything."

What nutrition has in common with politics and religion is that there is a lot of conflicting information being spouted from every which way. Due to the various health crises in the U.S., everyone is searching for a way to be healthy. And when that happens, the search for truth can be supplemented with partisanship, thus shifting the conversation from the frontal cortex, the place of curious inquiry, to the amygdala, where the sympathetic fight or flight response lives. "Oh you're a part of that group that emphasizes food X? My group emphasizes food Y, and I will do whatever I can to show that I don't agree with you (or that there is no definite truth we can say at all about diet and health.)"

Or another thing can happen in this situation of conflicting info. We can point to any nutrition article that even gives the appearance of agreeing with us to bolster another claim we make. This week, I read an article about how Jews invented yogurt. (Did you know Dannon was started by a Jew?) In order to elevate yogurt, the author linked to this article claiming that recent research has shown how yogurt can heal stomach issues.

I'm not making any claims about the health effects of yogurt or about any food in this email. But this scientific study actually says they found no significant difference between using probiotic and non-probiotic yogurt to resolve certain stomach issues. In the conclusion, the authors say "Further study is needed to evaluate the role of probiotics in adults".

Maybe yogurt is healthy. Maybe it's a superfood. But that conclusion cannot be attested to from this study. But the author citing the article felt comfortable declaring that research shows health benefits from yogurt.

Obviously, the point of the article was to bolster our perception of yogurt so people reading the article would feel more positively about the Jewish people as we helped bring this magical food into existence.

But if someone is at a point where we can say anything we want about any topic (politics, religion, nutrition), then we can no longer say anything.

But it might have always been this way. Eliezer when talking with the family of Rivka said he would not eat anything until he had spoken his piece and made the request to bring her to Yitzchak as a wife.

Why did he not want to eat?

I hypothesize that when eating, we trigger that part of ourselves that goes beyond curious inquiry and go into survival mode. Instead of being open to suggestion, our sympathetic system is more easily activated and we may not be able to discuss heavy topics like marriage with an open mind. Eliezer knew this and wanted to talk about the heavy topic before the meal while the parasympathetic system (the functional opposite of the sympathetic system) still had more control. (I hope some behavioral scientist does an actual study about people's behavior during meals as opposed to before a meal. If it's found to have no effect, I'll have to revisit this answer.)

Maybe I'm a dreamer, but imagine a world where when someone offers an opinion, factoid, belief, etc. Would that everyone would react more in a spirit of curious inquiry rather than defensiveness. As a human being myself, I definitely need to work on my responses. Hopefully I'll get to meet people with differing views to give me practice working on this skill.

Now, you might think I'm being cynical, but I actually find this situation humorous. I'm happy not to talk about things that people don't want to talk about. I am also curious to see what other topics will enter our "forbidden list" in the future, and what topics will come off. 50 years ago, you probably couldn't say smoking was unhealthy in polite company but now even smokers agree that there are health risks. There are political and religious issues that used to be controversial but now are not. Maybe in 50 years we'll all agree on what the healthiest diet is. Who knows where we'll go.

Life is Beautiful.

Shabbat Shalom!

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Rav Kook Torah Chayei Sarah: The Burial of Sarah

Curiously, the Torah dedicates more verses to describe the purchase of a burial plot for Sarah than all of the rest of her full life of 127 years. What is so significant about this acquisition? And why was the city of Hebron chosen for Sarah's burial?

Jacob's House

Isaiah prophesied that in the future era,

"Many nations will come and say, 'Let us go up to the mountain of God, to the house of the God of Jacob" (Isaiah 2:3).

Why will the nations be drawn specifically to the "God of Jacob," and not the God of Abraham or the God of Isaac? The Sages explained:

“Not like Abraham who saw it as a Mountain, nor like Isaac for whom it was a Field, but like Jacob, who called it a House.” (Pesachim 88a)

What did the Sages mean by Mountain, Field, and House? On a simple level, they refer to pivotal events in the lives of the Avot. Abraham's greatest service of God was the test of the Akeidah that took place on the Mountain of Moriah. Isaac, we are told, would meditate in a Field (Gen. 24:63). And Jacob named the place of awe-inspiring holiness where he dreamed of angels and Divine promises, Beth-El — the House of God.

Yet these locations carry a deeper significance. Mountain, Field, and House are metaphors for different ways to serve God. The service of Abraham and Isaac was a universalistic service, accessible to all. It was like a mountain or an open field; all were welcome to join in. Abraham, the “father of many nations,” sought to repair the sin of Adam and influence all of humanity. His life's goal was to publicize the name of God for all peoples. Isaac similarly sanctified the name of Heaven throughout the world.

Abraham and Isaac looked outwards, but Jacob focused inwards. In the metaphor of “God's house,” Jacob limited the holiness of Israel to the framework of his family, his home of twelve sons. He built Beit Yisrael, the House of Israel. Unlike Abraham and Isaac, Jacob's children all remained within the Jewish people.

While Abraham and Isaac's influence was inclusive and universal, Jacob's service was exclusive to Israel. For this reason it is represented by the image of an enclosed house. Surrounded by protective walls, the special sanctity of Israel is safeguarded from negative external influences. “Israel shall dwell securely, alone” (Deut. 33:28).

Separate Holiness

Why must Israel be distanced from the other nations? This isolation prepares the Jewish people for their special mission, and enables them to demonstrate the proper path for the rest of the world. “The nations shall walk by your light” (Isaiah 60:3).

When the nations will aspire to connect to holiness, they will recognize that the sanctity of Israel is separate and distinct. They will say, “Let us go up to the house of Jacob.” Let us go and emulate the distinct holiness of Jacob.

Like Jacob, Sarah recognized the need for this protected holiness. She was the one who demanded that Ishmael be sent away, to remove his negative influence on her son.

And Sarah initiated the process of separating and designating the Land of Israel to the Jewish people. This began with her burial in Hebron.

Hebron, the Future Sanctity of Israel

The very first Jewish acquisition of land in Eretz Yisrael was the purchase of the Machpeilah cave in Hebron. Through the burial of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs, Hebron became a symbol of the initial acquisition of the Land of Israel. We similarly find that, while Hebron was never the permanent capital of Israel, the reign of King David — an era of complete Jewish sovereignty over the Land of Israel — began in Hebron. Hebron signifies the future ownership and holiness of the Land of Israel.

When Abraham was commanded, “Rise, walk the land, through its length and breadth” (Gen. 13:17), where did he go? He immediately settled in Hebron. Hebron is the focal point of potential sanctity of the Land of Israel. Hebron is where future generations take possession of their inheritance and realize their destiny — by virtue of those buried in ancient times.

This concept of future sanctity found expression in the unusual system used to divide up the Land in the time of Joshua. According to one opinion (Baba Batra 117a), the Land of Israel was apportioned according to the Israelites who left Egypt, even though they had died in the desert and never made it to Israel. Usually it is the living who inherit the dead — i.e., the number of living descendants determines how an inheritance is divided. Here, though, it was the other way around: the dead determined how the living would inherit land.

So, too, Sarah's burial — the very first Jewish burial in the Land of Israel — determined the future inheritance and sanctity of the Land. Sarah designated this land for her descendants. She separated Eretz Yisrael from the rest of the world, just as she separated her son from Ishmael. Sarah initiated the special heritage of the Land and the people of Israel.

(Adapted from Shemu'ot HaRe'iyah 9: Chaye Sarah, 5690/1929.)

<http://www.ravkooktorah.org/HAYEI64.htm>

Chaye Sarah (5773) – Hopes and Fears

By Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Former UK Chief Rabbi,*

The sedra of Chaye Sarah focuses on two episodes, both narrated at length and in intricate detail. Abraham buys a field with a cave as a burial place for Sarah, and he instructs his servant to find a wife for his son Isaac. Why these two events? The simple answer is because they happened. That, however, cannot be all. We misunderstand Torah if we think of it as a book that tells us what happened. That is a necessary but not sufficient explanation of biblical narrative. The Torah, by identifying itself as Torah, defines its own genre. It is not a history book. It is Torah, meaning “teaching.” It tells us what happened only when events that occurred then have a bearing on what we need to know now. What is the “teaching” in these two episodes? It is an unexpected one.

Abraham, the first bearer of the covenant, receives two promises – both stated five times. The first is of a land. Time and again he is told, by G-d, that the land to which he has travelled – Canaan – will one day be his.

(1) *Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him. (12:7)*

(2) *The Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, “Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north, south, east and west. All the land that you see, I will give you and your offspring forever . . . Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.” (13: 14-17)*

(3) *Then He said to him, “I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldees to give you this land to take possession of it.” (15: 7)*

(4) *On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates – the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Gergashites and Jebusites.” (15: 18-21)*

(5) *“I will establish My covenant as an everlasting covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your G-d and the god of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give you as an everlasting possession to you and to your descendants after you; and I will be their G-d.” (17: 7-8)*

The second was the promise of children, also stated five times:

(1) *“I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great and you will be a blessing.” (12: 2)*

(2) *“I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted.” (13: 16)*

(3) *He took him outside and said, “Look up at the heavens and count the stars – if indeed you can count them” Then He said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” (15: 5)*

(4) *"As for Me, this is My covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations."*
(17: 4-5)

(5) *"I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars of the sky and as the sand on the seashore."* (22: 17)

These are remarkable promises. The land in its length and breadth will be Abraham's and his children's as "an everlasting possession." Abraham will have as many children as the dust of the earth, the stars of the sky, and the sand on the seashore. He will be the father, not of one nation, but of many. What, though, is the reality by the time Sarah dies? Abraham owns no land and has only one son (he had another, Ishmael, but was told that he would not be the bearer of the covenant).

The significance of the two episodes is now clear. First, Abraham undergoes a lengthy bargaining process with the Hittites to buy a field with a cave in which to bury Sarah. It is a tense, even humiliating, encounter. The Hittites say one thing and mean another. As a group they say, "Sir, listen to us. You are a prince of G-d in our midst. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs." Ephron, the owner of the field Abraham wishes to buy, says: "Listen to me, I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. I give it to you in the presence of my people. Bury your dead." As the narrative makes clear, this elaborate generosity is a façade for some extremely hard bargaining. Abraham knows he is "an alien and a stranger among you," meaning, among other things, that he has no right to own land. That is the force of their reply which, stripped of its overlay of courtesy, means: "Use one of our burial sites. You may not acquire your own." Abraham is not deterred. He insists that he wants to buy his own. Ephron's reply – "It is yours. I give it to you" – is in fact the prelude to a demand for an inflated price: four hundred silver shekels. At last, however, Abraham owns the land. The final transfer of ownership is recorded in precise legal prose (23: 17-20) to signal that, at last, Abraham owns part of the land. It is a small part: one field and a cave. A burial place, bought at great expense. That is all of the Divine promise of the land that Abraham will see in his lifetime.

The next chapter, one of the longest in the Mosaic books, tells of Abraham's concern that Isaac should have a wife. He is – we must assume – at least 37 years old (his age at Sarah's death) and still unmarried. Abraham has a child but no grandchild – no posterity. As with the purchase of the cave, so here: acquiring a daughter-in-law will take much money and hard negotiation. The servant, on arriving in the vicinity of Abraham's family, immediately finds the girl, Rebecca, before he has even finished praying for G-d's help to find her. Securing her release from her family is another matter. He brings out gold, silver, and clothing for the girl. He gives her brother and mother costly gifts. The family have a celebratory meal. But when the servant wants to leave, brother and mother say, "Let the girl stay with us for another year or ten [months]." Laban, Rebecca's brother, plays a role not unlike that of Ephron: the show of generosity conceals a tough, even exploitative, determination to make a profitable deal. Eventually patience pays off. Rebecca leaves. Isaac marries her. The covenant will continue.

These are, then, no minor episodes. They tell a difficult story. Yes, Abraham will have a land. He will have countless children. But these things will not happen soon, or suddenly, or easily. Nor will they occur without human effort. To the contrary, only the most focused willpower will bring them about. The divine promise is not what it first seemed: a statement that G-d will act. It is in fact a request, an invitation, from G-d to Abraham and his children that they should act. G-d will help them. The outcome will be what G-d said it would. But not without total commitment from Abraham's family against what will sometimes seem to be insuperable obstacles.

A land: Israel. And children: Jewish continuity. The astonishing fact is that today, four thousand years later, they remain the dominant concerns of Jews throughout the world – the safety and security of Israel as the Jewish home, and the future of the Jewish people. Abraham's hopes and fears are ours. (Is there any other people, I wonder, whose concerns today are what they were four millennia ago? The identity through time is awe inspiring.) Now as then, the divine promise does not mean that we can leave the future to G-d. That idea has no place in the imaginative world of the first book of the Torah. To the contrary: the covenant is G-d's challenge to us, not ours to G-d. The meaning of the events of Chayei Sarah is that Abraham realised that G-d was depending on him. Faith does not mean passivity. It means the courage to act and never to be deterred. The future will happen, but it is we – inspired, empowered, given strength by the promise – who must bring it about.

* <https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation-chayei-sarah-hopes-and-fears/> Note: because Likutei Torah and the Internet Parsha Sheet, both attached by E-mail, normally include the two most recent Devrei Torah by Rabbi Sacks, I have selected an earlier Dvar.

The Calm After the Storm: An Essay on Chayei Sarah

By Adin Even-Israel (Steinsaltz) * © Chabad 2021

Tempest and tranquility

The transition from Parshat Vayeira to Parshat Chayei Sarah is very abrupt; the contrast between them is almost immeasurably stark.

Parshat Vayeira is full of exciting events, which surely made headlines in those days. As early as Parshat Lech Lecha, Abraham's war against the four kings was an international affair. The devastation of Sodom was likewise a tumultuous and geopolitically significant event. In the narrative of Abraham's family life, we read of the Akeidah, which was certainly a profound and important event. The parshah is replete with angels and lofty matters, and it takes place entirely on a plane of great tension between momentous ascents and descents. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah, for example, is very complex and raises fundamental questions, such as to what extent God intervenes in the world and how a place can be condemned to complete eradication, despite God's promise after the Flood.

By contrast, Parshat Chayei Sarah is very tranquil. It deals with Sarah's burial in Me'arat HaMachpelah, the courtship of Isaac and Rebecca, and the latter part of Abraham's life.

Unlike the previous parshah, in which each event was an extra-ordinary occurrence, this parshah features events that can and do happen in every generation. Nowadays as well, people often argue over burial sites – if not with the Hittites then with the head of the burial society. Similarly, the match of Isaac and Rebecca is, all in all, not such a dramatic story. The story of Jacob and Rachel is at least somewhat romantic. There is a man and a woman, there is love – there is at least a story. Here, the match is arranged by Isaac's representative Eliezer, who returns to the family's place of origin and finds an appropriate wife for his master. Finally, after Abraham has finished caring for his son, he remarries and has children, who do not appear to interest us at all. These are commonplace occurrences which, were it not for the fact that they involve our esteemed patriarchs, would not even be reported in the newspapers, and perhaps would not even be reported to the neighbors.

The two parshot – Parshat Vayeira and Parshat Chayei Sarah – stand side by side as though for the sake of contrast. What is more, even the ancillary characters that appear in Parshat Vayeira seem to remain constant in Parshat Chayei Sarah to reinforce this contrast. Our sages explain¹ that "his servant, the elder of his house"² – whom Abraham sent to find a wife for Isaac – is Eliezer; and when the Torah records that Abraham took with him 318 men to the war of the kings,³ this refers to Eliezer as well, whose name has a numerical value of 318.⁴ Abraham's chief military officer, who is victorious in war, is the same person who is sent to negotiate a match for Isaac.

Every person's life consists of two different modes. One mode is characterized by ascents and descents, while the other is characterized by calm and tranquility, without major events or great excitement. In a certain respect, this is also the difference between the summer season and the winter season in the Jewish calendar. Our entire summer – from Passover onward – is full of events. In the winter, even if we include all the rabbinically-ordained holidays – Chanukah, Purim, and Tu BiShevat – these months are still largely devoid of religious events.

In every person, there is a sort of inner debate as to whether he would prefer great excitement or calm and tranquility. There is a side, even in one's spiritual life, that despises the sense that nothing is happening, feeling bored and unstimulated. But the opposite side also exists, the aspect of "Jacob wished to live in tranquility."⁵ Jacob was not interested in unusual or dramatic events; he did not want to pursue romance or other developments. He wanted to settle down quietly for as long as his circumstances would permit.

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov uses similar categories to describe two forms of worship: There is calm, tranquil worship, generally characteristic of people who feel settled in society; and there is also ecstatic, frenzied worship, characteristic of people who do not feel settled in society. It is worth noting that the first form of worship is not limited to laypeople – to

balebatim – and the latter form of worship is not limited to yeshiva students. How one approaches his relationship with God does not depend on what he does during the day, as many believe, but on something more personal, more innate.

The pendulum

Sometimes, it is precisely those who generally operate in a state of calm who will seek out excitement in their lives, and it is those who lead tumultuous lifestyles who will seek out calm and tranquility. In any case, even those who seek out excitement often find it difficult to maintain such a lifestyle over a long period of time. One cannot expect to achieve great things without experiencing periods of stagnation and complacency. This reality is rooted in human nature itself. After all, we are not built as one harmonious unit, with body, soul, and various aspects of our personalities in complete harmony. If one tries to pull things in one direction, the law governing both the physical and the spiritual dictates that there will be an equal reaction in the opposite direction.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk, in his work *Peri HaAretz*, describes this problem using the example of a pendulum. A pendulum cannot move to just one extreme. If it swings far to the left, it must also swing back to the right in equal measure. So it is in the service of God: It is impossible to constantly ascend. Everyone inevitably experiences descents and falls in his spiritual life, each person in his own way. Although there is a difference between the fall of the righteous and the fall of the wicked – the distance of the fall, where one lands after the fall, and in what condition one finds himself – nevertheless, a fall is a fall, and the resulting trauma is the same trauma.

Anyone who has experienced such a rise and fall, even on a small scale, knows that this is a problem. Look at our history. Our greatest spiritual disaster was the sin of the Golden Calf, and that story underscores precisely this point. The People of Israel were taken and suddenly elevated to the great height of the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. When they, quite naturally, do not undergo fundamental change all at once, they inevitably experience a great fall.

My purpose here is not to denigrate a stirring, stormy life. However, one cannot ignore the dark side inherent in a life of dramatic ascents and jumps: equally dramatic descents and falls. In the tranquil mode of life, while one does not make drastic changes or great leaps, nevertheless, in avoiding exposure to falling he has a better chance of persevering in his course.

Two paths

There have been many discussions, in various forums, as to whether these two modes lead to the same place but each one is appropriate for different types of people, or whether there is actually a preferred path that can take a person farther and higher than the other. In the animal kingdom, some creatures advance in jumps, while others can only crawl. There certainly is a difference between a deer and a snail. While they both can travel from one place to another, the snail is much more limited than the deer, unable to reach the high places to which the deer can easily leap.

A similar question is that of the “shorter but riskier” path and the “longer but safer” path. The first path may be quicker, but may also contain dangers along the way. The second path allows one to reach his destination more securely, but only if he dedicates more time to the journey. Do they really reach the same place?

To a great extent, these differences in style depend on and are ingrained in a person’s character. For example, one who feels “settled down” in his life need not necessarily be married with children; even a five-year-old boy can already act the part of a layperson – a baal habayit. He still may need nurturing care, but his character may be that of a baal habayit in every respect. Conversely, there can be a lively old man for whom the pace of a baal habayit is inappropriate, and who never “settled down” entirely despite his advanced age.

There are Jews who are outraged by the sight of a baal habayit; they cannot stand his readiness to accept a life of utter tranquility. On the other hand, there are people who naturally gravitate to that lifestyle. It is clear to them, by their nature, that in life one must settle down and work, on a regular and steady basis, as a matter of routine. One does not change the order of things; one follows the custom of one’s predecessors. If his father was an ox, then he will be a calf, as it says, “For I am not better than my fathers.”⁶ This is life’s structure and its framework; only within that framework does one effect changes. Similarly, the Midrash relates that “Abraham called [the place of divine revelation] a mountain, Isaac called it a field, and Jacob called it a home.”⁷ In this version, the sons operate within the same framework as the fathers and follow the same pattern, reflecting basic continuity. There is much virtue in this. The strength of such a person is the ability to steadily persist and persevere, without needing to go to extremes or experience grand adventures.

Back and forth

Ultimately, despite the ingrained differences in our personalities, there is also an element that transcends personality, namely, freedom of choice. Ultimately, people choose their own path, the path by which to ascend God's mountain.

The Torah itself does not appear to decisively favor one side or the other. If, nonetheless, there is a message that the Torah conveys, it is that a person need not adhere to one mode exclusively. After a period of excitement, there can be a period of calm, and this calm is not necessarily a descent.

The point of Parshat Chayei Sarah is not that Abraham has grown old and can no longer do everything that he used to do – wage war, circumcise himself, etc. What this teaches us is that there are different periods in life. The Torah does not present one mode of life as intrinsically preferable to the other. Rather, the Torah posits the reality that people need to learn to conduct themselves in both modes, because there is no one single way to live in which one can find continuous and lasting success. On the one hand, we live in a world where each day presents new situations that have never been experienced before. On the other hand, this same world is also built on routine, and life is often characterized more by its trivialities than by its drama.

Both modes are integral to the complete human being; like the fires in Ezekiel's chariot vision, they move "back and forth"⁸ within each person's character. Man must be capable of great excitement, but he must also be prepared to live without it. There are periods in a person's life when he must move at a frenetic pace, without stopping once to rest. Even when this frenzy of activity causes pain and stress, he must not stop, or he will fall. But there are other times when he must be passive and reactive rather than take dynamic action or innovate. In order to straddle both modes, one must be able to maintain a state of constant flux: at certain times emulating a burning flame, and at other times remaining calm and tranquil.

To some extent, the course of Jewish life forces us to follow this path of constant duality and change. Once a week, on Shabbat, we are instructed to change the basic pace of our lives. Throughout the week one is immersed in his work, whether it is physical labor or other work that involves pressure and stress. Once a week, a day arrives during which the whole essential structure must change: One moves from a state of constant activity and movement to the pattern of Shabbat, whose whole essence is that man becomes a vessel for the holiness of the day – he must sit still, in peace and tranquility, calm and quiet. This is a true "back and forth," and one must develop the inner ability to operate in both of these modes.

Exploit the energy

The relationships between these two modes of life are diverse and multifaceted. Sometimes, it is best to begin with a period of listening, study, and absorption, and only afterward switch to a period of creativity and breakthrough. Sometimes, the proper order in the working process is precisely the opposite: First one works at breaking things down and smashing them, so that afterward it will be possible to build new things. And sometimes it is precisely one who has experienced a period of calm and tranquility who feels a need to change gears and accelerate the pace of his life.

These two aspects present themselves in the various stages of a person's life, and one must learn to utilize them when opportunities for growth arise. Paradoxically, the perfect time to acquire Torah and good deeds is when one's evil inclination seems to be at its strongest. When everything is most volatile, that is the time in which one can ascend in spirituality and intimacy with God. If one does not exploit the natural energy that one has when young in order to run, then when he is older it will become much more difficult for him. If one wants to engage in the service of God, and this does not cause him to reach for the heavens, then perhaps he is not truly as young as he appears. If a person does not desire great things at a time in his life when he is naturally driven toward them, when will he desire them? Later in life, when a person declines, it becomes much more difficult to leap to great heights.

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that our forefathers never accepted age as an excuse. Perhaps that is one of the reasons that Abraham was circumcised when he was ninety-nine years old – so that no one would be able to claim advanced age as an excuse to avoid starting on a new path. That person would simply look at Abraham, who at ninety-nine made a new start from the same place where an eight-day-old baby begins.

Even someone who has seemingly reached the latter part of his life, generally a time of decline, can still grow. After all, all of Parshat Vayeira transpires at a time when Abraham, one would think, should have been sitting calmly in his rocking chair – he was about one hundred years old, yet it was at this stage that he experienced many of the momentous and dramatic events of his life.

Betuel our patriarch?

The sequence of Parshat Vayeira immediately followed by Parshat Chayei Sarah teaches us an additional point. In order to live properly in the mode of calm and tranquility, one must know how to live in the other mode as well. One cannot maintain a state of constant, fast-paced activity throughout his entire life; but to ensure that the quiet life does not become a life of stagnation and decline, one must first experience great ascents and self-devotion. If someone has not first experienced a spiritually exciting world and all that it entails, he must not proceed to the routine of everyday life, for then the dangers of such a life will overshadow its benefits. There are two worlds – a world of fire and a world of water, a world of tempest and a world of tranquility – and not only does each world exist alongside its opposite, but each world actually builds the other. If one has never seen angels, he will not be able to sit and engage properly with merchants without sinking into this mundane lifestyle and remaining there.

Similarly, if Abraham had never experienced the Akeidah and the events of Parshat Vayeira, he would not have been able to spiritually survive the tranquil events of Parshat Chayei Sarah. In Isaac's narrative, from the Akeidah onward, major events are far and few between, especially compared to Abraham's narrative. This is a direct result of the fact that only one who experienced the Akeidah can later settle down and successfully lead a quiet life.

Isaac digs wells and the Philistines dig wells. What is the difference between the two? Abraham buys a field and the Hittites sell a field. What is the difference between the two? There are two fathers involved in the match of Isaac and Rebecca. In a certain sense, both fathers are our patriarchs. The Jewish people is descended from Betuel, the father of Rebecca, just as much as it is descended from Abraham. However, at least for us as a nation, there is a fundamental difference between the father of the groom and the father of the bride. Betuel is a faded figure, lost in the tides of time. He remained an Aramean, the son of an Aramean, and nothing more than that. In contrast, Abraham, who traveled from the deepest depths to the highest heights, is known as Abraham our patriarch. Because of his incredible journey, Abraham can now walk on level ground as well without sacrificing his greatness.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Yoma 28b.
2. Gen. 24:2.
3. 14:14.
4. Genesis Rabbah 44:9.
5. Genesis Rabbah 84:3
6. Kings I 19:4.
7. Midrash Psalms 81.
8. Ezek. 1:14.

* Rabbi Adin Even-Israel (Steinsaltz) (1937-2020) was internationally regarded as one of the leading rabbis of this century. The author of many books, he was best known for his monumental translation of and commentary on the Talmud.

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/4943515/jewish/The-Calm-After-the-Storm.htm#footnoteRef1a4943515

Chayei Sarah: Lighting Up the World

by Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky * © Chabad 2021

“Isaac brought Rebecca into the tent of his mother Sarah” (Genesis 24:67).

Although Abraham lit the Shabbat candles after Sarah’s passing (for he observed all the Torah’s commandments), his candles did not remain lit throughout the week, as Sarah’s had. But when Rebecca began kindling the Shabbat lights, her candles continued to burn miraculously the whole week.

This demonstrates the unique ability of Jewish women and girls — who are all “daughters” of Sarah and Rebecca — to influence the spiritual character of the home, illuminating it with the holiness of the Shabbat throughout the ensuing mundane week. Although the illumination provided by their candles might be physically visible for only a limited time, their spiritual illumination continues throughout the entire week.

* — from *Daily Wisdom #1*

Gut Shabbos,
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Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

The Kindness of Strangers

In 1966 an eleven-year-old black boy moved with his parents and family to a white neighbourhood in Washington. Sitting with his two brothers and two sisters on the front step of the house, he waited to see how they would be greeted. They were not. Passers-by turned to look at them but no one gave them a smile or even a glance of recognition. All the fearful stories he had heard about how whites treated blacks seemed to be coming true. Years later, writing about those first days in their new home, he says, "I knew we were not welcome here. I knew we would not be liked here. I knew we would have no friends here. I knew we should not have moved here . . ."

As he was thinking those thoughts, a white woman coming home from work passed by on the other side of the road. She turned to the children and with a broad smile said, "Welcome!" Disappearing into the house, she emerged minutes later with a tray laden with drinks and sandwiches which she brought over to the children, making them feel at home. That moment – the young man later wrote – changed his life. It gave him a sense of belonging where there was none before. It made him realise, at a time when race relations in the United States were still fraught, that a black family could feel at home in a white area and that there could be relationships that were colour-blind. Over the years, he learned to admire much about the woman across the street, but it was that first spontaneous act of greeting that became, for him, a definitive memory. It broke down a wall of separation and turned strangers into friends.

The young man, Stephen Carter, eventually became a law professor at Yale and wrote a book about what he learned that day. He called it Civility.^[1] The name of the woman, he tells us, was Sara Kestenbaum, and she died all too young. He adds that it was no coincidence that she was a religious Jew. "In the Jewish tradition," he notes, such civility is called chessed – "the doing of acts of kindness – which is in turn derived from the understanding that human beings are made in the image of God." Civility, he adds, "itself may be seen as part of chessed: it does indeed require kindnesses toward our fellow citizens, including the ones who are strangers, and even when it is hard." To this day, he adds, "I can close my eyes and feel on my tongue the smooth, slick sweetness of the cream cheese and jelly sandwiches that I gobbled on that summer afternoon when I discovered how a single act of genuine and unassuming civility can change a life forever."^[2]

I never knew Sara Kestenbaum, but years after I had read Carter's book I gave a lecture to the Jewish community in the part of Washington where she had lived. I told them Carter's story, which they had not heard before. But they nodded in recognition. "Yes," one said, "that's the kind of thing Sara would do."

Something like this thought was surely in the mind of Abraham's servant, unnamed in the text but traditionally identified as Eliezer, when he arrived at Nahor in Aram Naharaim, northwest Mesopotamia, to find a wife for his master's son. Abraham had not told him to look for any specific traits of character. He had simply told him to find someone from his own extended family. Eliezer, however, formulated a test:

Lord, God of my master Abraham, make me successful today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. May it be that when I say to a young woman, 'Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too'—let her be the one You have chosen for Your servant Isaac. By this I will know that You have shown kindness [chessed] to my master." (Gen. 24:12-14)

His use of the word chessed here is no accident, for it is the very characteristic he is looking for in the future wife of the first Jewish child, Isaac, and he found it in Rebecca.

It is the theme, also, of the book of Ruth. It is Ruth's kindness to Naomi, and Boaz's to Ruth, that Tanach seeks to emphasise in sketching the background to David, their great-grandson, who would become Israel's greatest King. Indeed the Sages said that the three characteristics most important to Jewish character are modesty, compassion, and kindness.^[3] Chessed, what I have defined elsewhere as "love as deed,"^[4] is central to the Jewish value system.

The Sages based it on the acts of God himself. Rav Simlai taught: "The Torah begins with an act of kindness and ends with an act of kindness. It begins with God clothing the naked – "The Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skin and clothed them," (Gen. 3:21) – and it ends with Him caring for the dead: "And He [God] buried [Moses] in the Valley." (Deut. 34:6). (Talmud Bavli, Sotah 14a)

Chessed – providing shelter for the homeless, food for the hungry, assistance to the poor; visiting the sick, comforting mourners and providing a dignified burial for all – became constitutive of Jewish life. During the many centuries of exile and dispersion Jewish communities were built around these needs. There were chevrot, "friendly societies," for each of them.

In seventeenth-century Rome, for example, there were seven societies dedicated to the provision of clothes, shoes, linen, beds and warm winter bed coverings for children, the poor, widows and prisoners. There were two societies providing trousseaus, dowries, and the loan of jewellery to poor brides. There was one for visiting the sick, another bringing help to families who had suffered bereavement, and others to perform the last rites for those who had died – purification before burial, and the burial service itself. Eleven fellowships existed for educational and religious aims, study and prayer, another raised alms for Jews living in the Holy Land, and others were involved in the various activities associated with the circumcision of newborn boys. Yet others provided the poor with the means to fulfil commands such as mezuzot for their doors, oil for the Chanukah lights, and candles for the Sabbath.^[5]

Chessed, said the Sages, is in some respects higher even than tzedakah: Our masters taught: loving-kindness [chessed] is greater than charity [tzedakah] in three ways. Charity is done with one's money, while loving-kindness may be done with one's money or with one's person. Charity is done only to the poor, while loving-kindness may be given both to the poor and to the rich. Charity is given only to the living, while loving-kindness may be shown to the living and the dead. (Talmud Bavli, Succah 49b)

Chessed in its many forms became synonymous with Jewish life and one of the pillars on which it stood. Jews performed kindnesses to one another because it was "the way of God" and also because they or their families had had intimate experience of suffering and knew they had nowhere else to turn. It provided an access of grace in dark times. It softened the blow of the loss of the Temple and its rites:

Once, as R. Yohanan was walking out of Jerusalem, R. Joshua followed him. Seeing the

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Temple in ruins, R. Joshua cried, "Woe to us that this place is in ruins, the place where atonement was made for Israel's iniquities." R. Yohanan said to him: "My son, do not grieve, for we have another means of atonement which is no less effective. What is it? It is deeds of loving-kindness, about which Scripture says, 'I desire loving-kindness and not sacrifice'" (Hosea 6:6).[6]

Through chessed, Jews humanised fate as, they believed, God's chessed humanises the world. As God acts towards us with love, so we are called on to act lovingly to one another. The world does not operate solely on the basis of impersonal principles like power or justice, but also on the deeply personal basis of vulnerability, attachment, care and concern, recognising us as individuals with unique needs and potentialities.

It also added a word to the English language. In 1535 Myles Coverdale published the first-ever translation of the Hebrew Bible into English (the work had been begun by William Tyndale who paid for it with his life, burnt at the stake in 1536). It was when he came to the word chessed that he realised that there was no English word which captured its meaning. It was then that, to translate it, he coined the word "loving-kindness."

The late Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel used to say, "When I was young I admired cleverness. Now that I am old I find I admire kindness more." There is deep wisdom in those words. It is what led Eliezer to choose Rivka to become Isaac's wife and thus the first Jewish bride. Kindness brings redemption to the world and, as in the case of Stephen Carter, it can change lives. Wordsworth was right when he wrote that the, "Best portion of a good man's [and woman's] life" is their "little, nameless, unremembered, acts of kindness and of love."

[7]

[1] Stephen Carter, *Civility*, New York: Basic Books, 1999, pp. 61-75.

[2] Ibid., pp. 71-72.

[3] *Bamidbar Rabbah* 8:4.

[4] Jonathan Sacks, *To Heal a Fractured World*, pp. 44-56.

[5] Israel Abrahams, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*, London, Edward Goldston, 1932, pp. 348-363.

[6] *Avot de-Rabbi Natan*, 4.

[7] From Wordsworth's poem, 'Tintern Abbey'.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

"When Rebecca looked up and saw Isaac, she fell from the camel. And she asked the servant: 'What man is this walking in the field to meet us?' And the servant responded, 'It is my master.' And she took her veil and covered herself" (Gen. 24:62-65).

The fascinating marriage of Isaac and Rebecca—from the circumstances surrounding their arranged nuptials to the devastating family split over their twin sons' bitter rivalry—contains vitally important lessons for couples in every generations. On the one hand, the Torah's description of the tenderness of their

marriage is extraordinary: "And Isaac brought [Rebecca] into the tent of his mother, Sarah... and [Rebecca] became his wife; and he loved her. And Isaac was comforted over the loss of his mother" [ibid., 24:67].

The Torah also mentions the impassioned prayers of Isaac on behalf of Rebecca, who was struggling with infertility [ibid., 25:21], as well as their lovemaking while in the land of Gerar [ibid., 26:8].

Nevertheless, and tragically, what seems to be missing from their relationship is open communication. Perhaps no better evidence for the distance between them is their unverbalized dispute surrounding the bekhorah, the spiritual blessings bequeathed from father to son.

Differences of opinion between parents will always exist, but if the father prefers Esau and the mother prefers Jacob regarding an issue as momentous as who will don the mantle of spiritual heir to Abraham, ought there not be a discussion and an opportunity to examine the true nature of their sons' very different characters in order to arrive at a consensus?

Instead, Rebecca resorts to ruse, casting the otherwise-guileless Jacob into a role of deception for which he is unnaturally suited. Not only does he perpetrate an act that will haunt him for the rest of his life, but what begins as a split between brothers comes to signify the far greater division between Jews and gentiles throughout history.

Why must Rebecca resort to deception? Why could she not simply have raised the issue with Isaac? The answer can be found in the initial encounter between Isaac and Rebecca, which reflects the gulf that separates them. Isaac had been meditating in the fields, and with the approach of Eliezer and the bride-to-be, he raises his eyes:

"When Rebecca looked up and saw Isaac, she fell from the camel. And she asked the servant: 'What man is this walking in the field to meet us?' And the servant responded, 'It is my master.' And she took her veil and covered herself" [ibid., 24:62-65].

The Netziv, Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Berlin (19th Century Poland), in his commentary Ha'Emek Davar, explains that Rebecca fell because she had never before seen a religious personality, a spiritual persona who communed with nature and actually spoke before God.

So awesome was the sight of Isaac transformed by prayer that she was literally knocked off her feet. Compared to the lying and cheating world of her father, Betuel, and her brother, Laban, Isaac projected a vision of purity with which Rebecca had no previous experience.

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When Eliezer revealed the man's identity, she took the veil and covered herself, not only as a sign of modesty, but as an expression of her unworthiness. From that moment on, the veil between them was never removed. She felt she could never speak to her husband as an equal. She never felt that she had the right to offer a dissenting opinion.

Granted that the veil comes to symbolize the distance between their worlds, but why was Isaac unable to bridge that gap?

The harrowing experience of the Akedah left Isaac in a permanent state of shock. In fact, a part of him always remained behind on Mount Moriah, as hinted at in the final verse of the Akedah: "Abraham returned to his young men, and together they went to Be'er Sheva, and Abraham resided in Be'er Sheva" [ibid., 22:19].

Where is Isaac? Why is he not mentioned? Very likely, the verse alludes to the fact that only Abraham came down from the mountain, while Isaac, or part of him, remained behind on the altar. Thus it is not surprising that the traumatized Isaac became a silent, non-communicative survivor. Indeed, Elie Wiesel referred to Isaac as the first survivor.

And if neither wife nor husband could speak openly with each other, there could be no real communication between them.

In my many years of offering marital counseling, I am never put off when one partner screams at the other. As a wife once said to her husband who complained that she yelled at him too often: "With whom then should I let out my frustrations? The stranger next door?" Of course, I am not advocating shouting, but a far more serious danger sign is silence – non-communication – between the couple.

A crucial lesson, then, from the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca is that we must spend a lifetime working on ourselves and on our relationship with our spouse. Most importantly, we must be honest with ourselves and honest with our spouse: loving them as we love ourselves, and learning how to disagree lovingly and respectfully.

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Patriarchal Events Foreshadow History for Their Descendants

The Ramban in Parshas Lech Lecha and other meforshim elsewhere in Sefer Bereshis discuss the concept of Ma'aseh Avos Siman L'Banim. This basic idea teaches that while the narration of Sefer Bereshis seems to be merely "nice stories," the reality is that the incidents that occurred to the Patriarchs of our nation—Avrohom, Yitzchak, and Yaakov—have profound effects on the rest of Jewish history. "Everything which occurred to the fathers happened to the sons as well." That which the Avos experienced set the pattern and the

template for what was destined to happen to Klal Yisrael for the rest of Jewish history.

For example, the Ramban points out the pattern (which does not take a genius to recognize) that when Avram went down to Egypt because of the famine, Pharaoh took Sarai, and as a result of that Hashem punished Pharaoh, who eventually sent Avram and Sarai away with great wealth. This is literally what happened with Yaakov Avinu and his children going down to Egypt because of a famine, and ultimately being sent out with great wealth after Pharaoh was punished. That which happened to the fathers, happened to the sons!

Some of the instances of the Ma'aseh Avos Siman L'Banim pattern are extremely obvious, like the case I just mentioned. Others are not so obvious. Perhaps we will only understand some of them in retrospect when the future redemption takes place and "history will be completed." Tonight, I would just like to share what I think is a very chilling instance of this principle.

In this week's parsha, Avraham comes back from the Akeida to learn that his wife has passed away. Avraham has the task of finding a suitable burial place for Sarah Imeinu. Chazal (at least according to some Rishonim) consider this to be the last of the Avraham's "Ten Tests". Whether it is the final test or not, Chazal are replete with the Ribono shel Olam's appreciation for how Avraham Avinu acted in this incident.

I will cite just two examples of how Chazal look at what Avraham Avinu did here: There is a famous Gemara in Bava Basra [16a]. The Satan approaches the Ribono shel Olam and tells Him "I have searched the entire world and I did not find another Tzadik like Avraham, for You told him 'Arise – walk the length and breadth of the Land for I will give it to you,' and yet, when he needed to bury Sarah he could not find a place to bury her (he had to buy it) and yet he did not question Your Ways." (The Gemara then says that HaKadosh Baruch Hu asked the Satan if he had ever seen the righteous Iyov, but we are not getting into that story.)

Similarly, there is a famous Medrash (Shemos Rabbah), which Rashi quotes in the beginning of Parshas Va'Era. The Almighty appeared to Moshe Rabbeinu (after Moshe had complained to Him "...Why have You harmed this people, why have You sent me? From the time I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your Name he harmed this people, but You did not rescue Your people.") [Shemos 5:22-23]. Hashem responded: "I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov as Kel Shakkai, but through My Name Hashem I did not become known to them." [Shemos 6:3].

The Medrash explains the deeper message in Hashem's mentioning the Avos to Moshe Rabbeinu here: "Woe to people who are lost

and who are never to be found. Many times, I appeared to them (the Avos) only with My "less miraculous" manifestation (Kel Shakkai) without making known to them My Name Hashem (which can change nature) and yet they never complained to Me despite all the troubles they encountered in life!"

Here again, the Medrash mentions that Hashem praised Avraham to Moshe, citing the fact that he had to pay an exorbitant price to pay for a gravesite for his wife, after having been promised that the entire Land would belong to his children – and yet Avraham never complained!

I heard an interesting question from Rav Issac Bernstein, a Rav in London England. He asks: Did Avraham Avinu really need to buy the Me'aras HaMachpelah? As soon as he went to Bnei Ches and asked for a place to bury his wife they told him "... You are a prince of G-d in our midst; in the choicest of our burial places bury your dead, any of us will not withhold his burial place from you, from burying your dead." [Bereshis 23:6] It sounds like they were telling him "It is yours for free!" Avraham Avinu responded, "I want to pay for it!" So Ephron, once he smelled the money, started negotiating a price.

But Avraham did not have to pay for this! It was offered to him for nothing. Why didn't he want to accept it? I can give you several reasons.

First, just like by the King of Sodom – Avraham refused to take anything that he did not pay for — "I do not want you to say that you made Avraham rich." [Bereshis 14:23], so too here he did not want a free burial plot! In general, there is a principle — "He who hates presents will live." [Mishlei 15:27].

Additionally, perhaps Avraham adopted the philosophy of the Brisker Rav. When Rav Yitzchak Zev Sovloveitchik was marrying off one of his sons, the proprietor of a Jerusalem catering hall came to him and said I want you to make the wedding by me and it will be free of charge. The Brisker Rav refused the offer and insisted on paying for it. He later commented "The most expensive way of doing something is getting it for free." (When you get something for free, you wind up indebted to your benefactor. Then you really need to pay).

However, whatever Avraham Avinu's calculations were to refuse the free gravesite, the truth of the matter is that it was offered to him free of charge. So what are these Gemaras and Medrashim telling us by pointing to Avraham Avinu who did not complain to G-d even though he needed to pay for a gravesite after being promised that the Land would belong to him?

Rav Bernstein cites an eye opening Pirkei D'Rebi Eliezer which mentions both of these

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teachings of Chazal and helps us understand the meaning of these Medrashim.

It says in Pirkei D'Rebi Eliezer that when the Malachim came to Avraham Avinu in Parshas Vayera and he wanted to slaughter a cow to make a meal for them, the cow ran away. The cow ran away...into the Me'aras HaMachpelah! Avraham ran after the cow and followed it into the ancient cave. When he went inside, he discovered Adam and Chava lying in the Me'aras HaMachpelah surrounded by lit candles with a fragrant aroma. He found them lying in exquisite serenity and suddenly felt spiritually inspired and uplifted by the site. At that moment he declared "This is where I want my wife and I to be buried!"

That is when Avraham Avinu first thought of purchasing the Me'aras HaMachpelah. When the time came to bury Sarah, he told the Children of Yevus (even though they were genealogically the Children of Ches as the Torah calls them Chitites, – since they lived in the city of Yevus, they were also referred to as Yevusim) that he wanted to buy the cave from them. They responded – we know that G-d is destined to give your descendants all this land, including our city of Yevus. Swear to us that you will not take the City of Yevus unless we give you permission! Avraham Avinu, the Medrash continues, agreed to the deal and signed a document to that effect. The inhabitants of Yevus took the document and made statues, which they put in the center of the city, to which they attached the document containing Avraham's oath that his descendants would not forcibly take the City of Yevus away from its original inhabitants.

Generations later, when the Israelites approached the City of Yevus, they saw these statues with the document and they therefore could not take the city away from the inhabitants, because of Avraham's oath.

Yevus is Yerushalayim. The Chittim in effect told Avraham – "Ad chatzi haMalchus..." – it is all yours to have – but not Yerushalayim! For that Avraham had to make an oath and for that he paid.

What is the end of the story? The Jews could not conquer Yevus. At the end of Sefer Shmuel, Dovid HaMelech came to a fellow named Aravna haYevusi and he asks to buy Yevus from him, because the Jews were unable to conquer it as a result of Avraham's shavua. That is the only way we got Yerushalayim. Dovid HaMelech the great-great (many times) grandson of Avraham Avinu had to pay to get Yerushalayim.

For 3,000 years, we have been fighting over Yerushalayim. That is what I mean that this is another example of Ma'aseh Avos Siman L'Banim. We know that Yerushalayim is the united and eternal capital of Eretz Yisrael. The Arabs say "No, this is our holy place also." This is history repeating itself. The actions of

the fathers foreshadow what will happen with their children. For 3,000 years, this has been going on – what will be with Jerusalem? Eventually, we got it and with G-d's Help we are going to once again have it – without anyone contesting our right to exclusive ownership.

Dvar Torah: Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Is the title of this week's parsha misleading? Chayei Sara means the life of Sara, but when one has a look at the content of the parsha, sadly it's all about the death of Sara, and the manner in which Avraham made arrangements to bury her.

In the Midrash, Rabbi Akiva draws a parallel between two outstanding Biblical characters, Sara Imeinu – Sarah our matriarch, and Esther HaMalkah, Queen Esther. What's the connection between the two? According to Rabbi Akiva, at the beginning of our parsha, the Torah tells us that Sara was 127 years old when she passed away. It was thanks to her merit that at a later time Esther became the queen over 127 provinces.

But the comparisons between the two run far deeper than that. After all, both Sara and Esther were exceptionally selfless and kindhearted people. Both had two names: Sarai became Sara, and Hadassah was Esther. Both of them were connected to royalty: Esther of course was the queen while Sara literally means princess, and she was given that name because she was a person of regal bearing.

Hashem said to Avraham, "Kol asher tomar elecha Sara, shema bekolah." – "Whatever Sarah tells you to do, hearken to her voice."

And in the book of Esther we are told, "Vaya'as Mordechai kechol asher tzivta elav Esther." – "Mordechai did all that which Esther asked him to do."

Actually there is one further comparison which I find to be the most compelling of them all: It's thanks to Sara and Esther that we exist as a people today. Esther, with the help of Heaven, was able to intervene in order to save us physically at a time when Haman sought to annihilate Am Yisrael. Sara gave birth to our people and it's thanks to her personal example that we have internalised her values and her teachings, which we keep in our hearts and in our minds to this day. Thanks to Sara, we have survived spiritually as a nation and that's why our parsha is called Chayei Sara. Sadly she passed away but in spirit she will always continue to live on.

Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah

Avraham & Yishmael: When Duty and Family Come into Conflict by Bracha Rutner

There is a dramatic pasuk, Breishit 25:9, at this conclusion of Parshat Chaya Sarah. **וַיַּקְרְבֶּרֶת אֹתָהּ יִצְחָק וַיַּשְׁמַעַל בְּנָיו אֲלֵיכֶם** – Yitzchak

and Yishmael, Avraham's sons, bury him in Maarat Hamacheplah. Why does the Torah tell us that both of them buried their father?

Shortly before the Torah tells us of Avraham's death and burial, we learn that Avraham married Ketura and had several sons with her. Avraham then sends Yishmael and all his other sons away. So, why is it that only Yishmael returns home to bury his father and perform the mitzvah known as **סְפִירַת אַמְתָּה** – a true kindness that cannot be repaid?

We do not hear much about the relationship between Avraham and Yishmael but the little we do is challenging. Avraham and Sarah are old and they do not have a child. Worried about the future, Sarah marries her handmaid Hagar with Avraham, and Hagar conceives immediately. The relationship between Sarah and Hagar sours and Hagar runs away. Eventually, she returns home, on the prodding and promise of great things for her son by an angel, and gives birth to a son. Who names this son? Avraham. This is in contrast to Rachel and Leah who name their own sons. Yishmael, who should have been welcomed with excitement by Sarah is instead ignored by her. Despite Sarah's lack of a connection with Yishmael, Avraham shows great care and concern for him.

As Yishmael grows up in the house of Avraham, Avraham is told he will have another son, Yitzchak, who will be his true descendant. Immediately Avraham is concerned about Yishmael – what will happen to him? According to the midrash, Avraham did not want Yishmael to be replaced. Clearly there was something that Avraham understood within the character of Yishmael, he clearly loves him and anticipates that he could be his true heir. As soon as he is given the commandment regarding the brit milah, Avraham circumcises Yishmael and in those pesukim Yishmael is referred to twice as **בֶּן** – his son. In this way, he shows that he loves his son and wants him to participate in fulfilling God's commands.

Then Yitzchak is born. Sarah grows concerned about Yishmael's behavior. There is a debate amongst the meforshim as to what she notices – is Yishmael practicing Avodah Zarah? That is difficult given that he grew up in Avraham's house. Is she worried that Yishmael views himself as the eldest and thinks he will inherit double? Or is it more simply that she doesn't want anything to threaten Yitzchak's place in the home? Perhaps Sarah sees something in the close relationship that has developed between Avraham and Yishmael. Sarah is so upset that she tells Avraham that he must send Yishmael away. This is viewed by Avraham as very bad – **רַע בְּעִינֵי**. He loves his son and does not want to send him away. Hashem says that he must heed Sarah's words but assures Avraham that Yishmael will become a great nation. Avraham sends Yishmael away, even getting up early in the morning to send him off. At this point

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though, Yishmael is referred to as **הַילָּךְ** – the boy. This may be Avraham's reluctant acceptance that Yishmael will not be his chosen son.

In Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer 30 we learn that Avraham does not abandon Yishmael totally. When Yishmael is grown, Avraham visits him and he encounters Yishmael's wife, who treats him poorly. Avraham leaves a message that Yishmael's house is broken. Yishmael divorces his wife and remarries. A few years later, Avraham returns to visit Yishmael and meets his new wife. She treats Avraham with the utmost kindness and he leaves her a message that Yishmael's house is in order. Yishmael knew that his father still loved him.

This is why Yishmael returned to bury Avraham. Yishmael and Yitzchak were loved by their father, who believed in both of them. His other children may have been loved, but were not a true part of Avraham's legacy. They did not bury Avraham. But Yishmael and Yitzchak did. Yishmael did recognize his place – that Yitzchak was the chosen son. And so Yitzchak's name is mentioned first. According to the Talmud in Babba Batra 16B, when Yishmael buried Avraham he did "teshuva". This can mean he repented or that he returned to his origins. With Yitzchak married and the next generation seemingly guaranteed, it was safe for Yishmael to return home to fulfill his duty to the father whom he loved and who loved him.

Avraham loved Yishmael but he understood his responsibility to raise his true heir, Yitzchak. And that these two children could not grow up in the same household. This duty did not prevent him from loving his son, only from living in the same household. Their bond was strong and remained so until the end of Avraham's life. Avraham never gave up on Yishmael – he always knew that he would amount to greatness.

Sefer Breishit provides us with models for different types of familial relationships and shows us that, ultimately, the love of family, of a father and a son, is a bond that cannot be broken. There may be situations that require sacrifice and circumstances that place a strain on family relationships. That is often part of life. Despite distance and duty, love for each other can hold us together.

Torah.Org Dvar Torah by Rabbi Label Lam

The Life He Lived

And these are the days of the years of Avraham's life that he lived: one hundred years and seventy years and five years. (Breishis 25: 7)

Here is the beginning of the Torah's obituary of one of the greatest people to ever walk on this planet, Avraham. There is a curiosity here that calls out for an explanation. A few words seem extra but we know that that cannot be.

This is the Torah's reporting. Why does it say, "that he lived"? Doesn't everybody live life? Is that not a redundancy?

There are a few approaches but they start from the same premise. The Malbim asks and amplifies the question as follows; "The years that were not spent serving HASHEM are not called years of life, but rather years of living as an animal lives and Avraham did not recognize HASHEM immediately." How then can it be said about the life of Avraham "that he lived" concerning all 175 years of his life?

He spent many years thinking and researching until he finally became convinced that HASHEM is the Creator and the Constant Conductor of the Universe. So why are all those early years included in the count of "that he lived"?

The Malbim finds another model for this very same expression, "that he lived" by the account of Adam's life. We know that after eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in defiance of HASHEM's command not to, and bringing death to the world, he spent 130 years doing Teshuvah.

From the fact that we find Adam's life is crowned with those words. "that he lived" tells us that through his Teshuvah he recovered all that he had lost. Such is the power of Teshuvah. The same can be said about Avraham.

He spent the first three years of his life in a cave hidden away for his safety. Once he saw the world with his original eyes he posited that there must be a single designer and a creator that is organizing the world. He examined 3,000 forms of idolatrous claims thoroughly and found them all lacking validity. At the age of 52 he became sufficiently convinced that there is One HASHEM Whose kindness spins and feeds a world that he began to share his findings with whoever would listen.

The approach of the Malbim is that once he realized TRUTH he did Teshuvah for the time he had lost in his youth. When one does Teshuvah from love then Aveiros are converted into Mitzvos. How does that work? Is it magical? No! It is a kindly opportunity afforded to us by the Creator but there is a valid logic to it. When a person realizes that

the Aveira put him at a greater distance from his Creator then the desire to come closer is stronger. It's the Aveira that drives the desire to overcome that distance. The Zohar states, "There is no light like the light that comes from darkness!"

Another approach is that those early years when Avraham was searching and researching are not at all discounted from the years "that he lived". What was he supposed to do? A young boy wakes up in a "non-observant" family setting. What is he supposed to do? He can't read Hebrew. He has no teachers. Can he be held accountable for wasting time from Torah until he discovers the Torah?! Of course not! All he can do is question and seek truth.

Avraham was doing exactly what he was meant to do in those early stages of his life. However, once he discovered TRUTH, he never looked back. He lived! All of the time he invested in the search was not time wasted. It was all one giant preparation for the life he lived.

Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel Encyclopedia of Jewish Values*

Why Is The Land Of Israel So Special For The Jewish People?

In this week's Parsha of Chayei Sara, many verses are devoted to Abraham's purchase of a burial plot in the land of Israel. Last week's Parsha ended with God telling Avraham how special the place of the Akeida (Sacrifice of Yitzchak) is forever for the Jewish people. What exactly is it about the Land of Israel that makes it so special for the Jewish people?

LEARNING TORAH There is no better or more appropriate place to learn Torah better than in the Land of Israel.¹ The Talmud² says that if a Jew does not mention the concept of Torah while also saying the blessing about the Land of Israel in the Grace, the blessing must be repeated, because one cannot have one concept without the other. Another statement³ says that leaving the Land of Israel is the greatest example of Bitul Torah, taking away time from Torah learning, because leaving the Land of Israel automatically implies a person will learn less Torah.

PRAAYER It is not be a difficult task to convince any Jew about the holiness of Jerusalem, especially for prayer, since the remnant of the

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Temple, the Western Wall, the holiest place on earth for the Jew, is located in that city. The sources maintain that even today, the presence of God is by the Western Wall.⁴ But even before the Temple was built on that spot, Jerusalem possessed holiness (see chapter about "The meaning of Jerusalem for the Jewish people" for an extensive discussion about this city). That is why the Temple, the place of communication with God through sacrifice and prayer, could only be built in Jerusalem.⁵

Long before the Temple was built, the place of the Temple had been used as a place to pray to God. According to Maimonides,⁶ it is the place where Cain and Abel brought the first sacrifices to God in human history. Mount Moriah is also the traditional place of the Binding of Isaac, where Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son upon God's commandment. Jacob prayed the traditional Evening prayer there for the first time,⁷ and it was also the place of Jacob's holy dream, in which the angels were going up and down a ladder from heaven. The Land of Israel was later legal intertwined with a special law, with coming to the Temple. The Talmud states that if a Jew did not own land in Israel, he could not fulfill the Mitzvah to come to the Temple three times a year at each Jewish holiday.⁸ This is based on an allusion in a Torah verse.⁹

THE PLACE TO FULFILL COMMANDMENTS Although most pious Jews in the Diaspora would never think of their observance as anything but fulfilling the Torah's wishes to the maximum, according to one Midrash¹⁰ there is no obligation at all to keep the Mitzvot-commandments outside the Land of Israel. However, the Rabbis instituted that they be kept in the Diaspora in order that the Jewish people do not forget how to keep the commandments, so that when they return to the Land, they will be know what to do! (It should be pointed out that Jewish law in practice does indeed obligate Diaspora Jews to keep the commandments outside the Land, despite this Midrash.) The dying request of Moses,¹¹ never fulfilled by God, was to enter the Land of Israel. Why was it so important to Moses to enter Israel? Only in order to be able to fulfill more commandments there.¹² There is something special about performance of the Mitzvot in Israel as well, and there are many commandments that cannot possibly be observed except in the Land of Israel, such as all the commandments relating to growing food on

¹ Midrash Vayikrah Rabbah 13:5

² Jerusalem Talmud, Berachot 11b

³ Chagigah 5b

⁴ Midrash Shemot Rabbah 2:2

⁵ Midrash Vayikra Rabbah 13

⁶ Maimonides, Hilchot Beit Habechira 2:2

⁷ Commentary of Rashi on Genesis 28:11, based on Chullin 91

⁸ Pesachim 8b

⁹ Deuteronomy 16:7

¹⁰ Midrash, Sifri Ekev, quoted by Rashi commentary on Deuteronomy 11:18

¹¹ Deuteronomy 4:1

¹² Sotah 14a

the land and then eating it.

The Land of Israel is linked to the Jewish people only through Judaism and the Mitzvot. The very first words uttered by God to the first Jew (Abraham) were to leave your homeland and come to live in Israel.¹³ The promise by God to Abraham contained only two ideas: having a large a nation and keeping the Land of Israel forever.¹⁴ Nothing there is mentioned about learning Torah, observing Shabbat, keeping Kosher or any other Mitzvah-commandment.

These promises of a large nation and the Land of Israel were passed down and repeated to Isaac¹⁵ and Jacob.¹⁶ Therefore, the Jewish claim to the Land today is based on that religious promise of God to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the Jewish people to inherit the Land forever. Without a belief in this promise, the Arabs would totally correct in claiming that the Jews in the 1800's decided to take over "their" land. While Jews do not expect Arabs to believe their claim simply because it says so in the Torah, Jews themselves who do not believe in Judaism as a religion cannot for themselves justify a Jewish claim for the Land of Israel. Just because Jews once lived there does not alone justify their having the Land today. But if they believe in the Torah and God's promise to the Jews to give them the Land "forever," then their claim today has some validity.

Thus, the Land of Israel was the focus of Judaism from the very first words uttered to Abraham continuing through today. The very first comment of Rashi in the Torah¹⁷ stresses that the purpose of entire first book of the Torah was to justify the Jewish claim to the Land of Israel, since only if God created the world and made the promise to the Forefathers could the Jews justify conquering Israel after their enslavement in Egypt, and then again in the twentieth century. And, lest any nation or any non-observant only in the direction of Israel and the Temple that a Jew faces while praying, no matter where on earth the Jew may be. The Talmud¹⁸ says that every activity of the Jew should have some reminder that the Jews do not have the land or the Temple. Therefore, each time a Jew eats a festive meal, he or she should omit one hors d'oeuvre, as a reminder that the Jews do not have the Land or the Temple. Each time a woman wears jewelry, she should not wear one piece as a reminder that the Jews do not have the Land or the Temple.

These two particular customs have not widely been adapted in practice by Jews. But the customs mentioned in the rest of that Talmudic passage have been practiced by Jews for hundreds of years, since Talmudic times. At the happiest moments of life, the Jew reminds

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himself or herself about the lack of the Temple and the Jewish homeland. At the moment when a Jew makes his most expensive life purchase, when a home is dedicated, a cornerstone is traditionally left off as a reminder. At the happiest moment of a person's life, usually the wedding day, the ceremony is not completed without reminding oneself of the destruction of the Temple and the lack of a Jewish homeland in the Land of Israel, by sprinkling ashes on the forehead (today we also symbolically break a glass). At the saddest moments in life, the Jew also does not forget the Land. The traditional phrase of comfort to the mourner is "May you be comforted with all the other mourners of Zion and Jerusalem." Therefore, the Land of Israel has always been and continues to be today the focus of Judaism. Without a belief in Judaism as a religion, all validity of Israel as a land for the Jewish people is gone.

**This column has been adapted from a series of volumes written by Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel "The Encyclopedia of Jewish Values" available from Urim and Amazon*

¹³ Genesis 12:1

¹⁴ Genesis 13:15-17

¹⁵ Genesis 26:3-4

¹⁶ Genesis 28:13-14

¹⁷ Rashi commentary on Genesis 1:1

¹⁸ Bava Batra 60b

Beloved Moments

With this in mind, let us return to the numerous repetitions throughout Chumash Bereishis of the fact that Avraham purchased Ma'aras Hamachpeilah from Efron. Our parsha is famous for its repetition of the story of Eliezer finding a wife for Yitzchak, which the sages explain by saying that the Torah repeats things to show how beloved they are. Likewise, the acquisition of Ma'aras Hamachpeilah is repeated at every opportunity, for it reflects the beloved moment when our people's acquisition of the Land of Israel began.

No Mention Necessary

Moreover, with this in mind, we may now understand why, as we noted, there is no mention of Ma'aras Hamachpeilah at all regarding the burial of Yitzchak. Yitzchak was unique among all the Avos, in that his entire life was lived in Eretz Yisrael. Since the totality of his existence was in that land, this made it unnecessary for our connection with it through the acquisition of Ma'aras Hamachpeilah to be mentioned regarding him.

[1] Bereishis 25:9-10. [2] Ibid. 49:30-32. [3] Ibid. 50:13. [4] Ibid. 25:39.

[5] See Ramban to verse 4. [6] Verses 3-7. [7] Verses 8-16. See e.g. commentaries of Alshich and Malbim for detailed discussion of these verses in this light. [8] Verses 17-20. [9] Verse 18. [10] Verse 20. [11] Ben Melech, Parshas Chayei Sarah.

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by **Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair** - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Sarah, the mother of the Jewish People, passes on at age 127. After mourning and eulogizing her, Avraham seeks to bury her in the Cave of Machpela. As this is the burial place of Adam and Chava, Avraham pays its owner, Ephron the Hittite, an exorbitant sum.

Avraham sends his faithful servant Eliezer to find a suitable wife for his son, Yitzchak, making him swear to choose a wife only from among Avraham's family. Eliezer travels to Aram Naharaim and prays for a sign. Providentially, Rivka appears. Eliezer asks for water. Not only does she give him water, but she draws water for all 10 of his thirsty camels (some 140 gallons)! This extreme kindness marks her as the right wife for Yitzchak and a suitable mother of the Jewish People. Negotiations with Rivka's father and her brother, Lavan, result in her leaving with Eliezer. Yitzchak brings Rivka into his mother Sarah's tent, marries her and loves her. He is then consoled for the loss of his mother.

Avraham remarries Hagar, who is renamed Ketura to indicate her improved ways. Six children are born to them. After giving them gifts, Avraham sends them to the East. Avraham passes away at the age of 175 and is buried next to Sarah in the Cave of Machpela.

PARSHA INSIGHTS

The Master of Chaos

"And Avraham expired and died at a good old age, mature and content..." (25:08)

A butterfly flapping its wings in Brazil can cause a tornado in Texas.

Chaos theory is an interdisciplinary theory and branch of mathematics focusing on the study of chaos: dynamical systems whose apparently random states of disorder and irregularities are actually governed by underlying patterns and deterministic laws that are highly sensitive to initial conditions. Chaos theory states that within the apparent randomness of chaotic complex systems, there are underlying patterns, interconnectedness, constant feedback loops, repetition, self-similarity, fractals, and self-organization. The butterfly effect, an underlying principle of chaos, describes how a small change in one state of a deterministic nonlinear system can result in large differences in a later state (meaning that there is sensitive dependence on initial conditions). A metaphor for this behavior is that a butterfly flapping its wings in Brazil can cause a tornado in Texas.

Small differences in initial conditions, such as those due to errors in measurements or due to rounding errors in numerical computation, can yield widely diverging outcomes for such dynamical systems, rendering long-term prediction of their behavior impossible in general. This can happen even though these systems are deterministic, meaning that their future behavior follows a unique evolution and is fully determined by their initial conditions with no random elements involved. In other words, the deterministic nature of these systems does not make them predictable. This behavior is known as deterministic chaos, or simply chaos. The theory was summarized by Edward Lorenz as: Chaos: When the present determines the future, but the approximate present does not approximately determine the future.

Chaotic behavior exists in many natural systems, including fluid flow, heartbeat irregularities, weather and climate. It also occurs spontaneously in some systems with artificial components, such as the stock market and road traffic. This behavior can be studied through the analysis of a chaotic mathematical model, or through analytical techniques such as recurrence plots and Poincaré maps. Chaos theory has applications in a variety of disciplines, including meteorology, anthropology, sociology, environmental science, computer science, engineering, economics, ecology, pandemic crisis management.

I've just finished reading a fascinating book called "Chaos: Making a New Science" by James Gleick. It's a tantalizing book that made me regret not having applied myself with more seriousness to learning mathematics at school. "Chaos" turns much of classical physics on its head:

"The idea that all these classical deterministic systems we'd learned about could generate randomness was intriguing. We were driven to understand what made that tick. You can't appreciate the kind of revelation that is unless you've been brainwashed by six or seven years of a typical physics curriculum. You're taught that there are classical models where everything is determined by initial conditions, and then there are quantum mechanical models where things are determined but you have to contend with a limit on how much initial information you can gather. Nonlinear was a word that you only encountered in the back of the book. A physics student would take a math course and the last chapter would be on nonlinear equations. You would usually skip that, and, if you didn't, all they would do is take these nonlinear equations and reduce them to linear equations, so you just get approximate solutions anyway. It was just an exercise in frustration. We had no concept of the real difference that nonlinearity makes in a model. The idea that an equation could bounce around in an apparently random way — that was pretty exciting. You would say, 'Where is this random motion coming from?'"

And:

"It was a realization that here is a whole realm of physical experience that just doesn't fit in the current framework. Why wasn't that part of what we were taught? We had a chance to look around the immediate world—a world so mundane it was wonderful—and understand something. They enchanted themselves and dismayed their professors with leaps to questions of determinism, the nature of intelligence, the direction of biological evolution. The glue that held us together was a long-range vision... It was striking to us that if you take regular physical systems which have been analyzed to death in classical physics, but you take one little step away in parameter space, you

end up with something to which all of this huge body of analysis does not apply. The phenomenon of chaos could have been discovered long, long ago. It wasn't, in part because this huge body of work on the dynamics of regular motion didn't lead in that direction. But if you just look, there it is. It brought home the point that one should allow oneself to be guided by the physics, by observations, to see what kind of theoretical picture one could develop. In the long run we saw the investigation of complicated dynamics as an entry point that might lead to an understanding of really, really complicated dynamics."

People don't know what they see. They see what they think they know.

"And Avraham expired and died at a good old age, mature and content..."

In what sense was Avraham "mature and content"? He could see the order in the "chaos" after looking into every aspect of Creation — higher and further than anyone before him. As a result, he could recognize his Creator. Avraham was indeed a very special soul who could see that "mother nature" has a Father.

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from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org>

to: ravfrand@torah.org

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subject: Rav Frand - Eliezer Journeys from Arur to Baruch by Bypassing Negiyus

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrasha Series on the weekly portion: #1224 – I Know She is Holding by Getting Engaged to Someone Else, But I Want To Try Going Out With Her Anyway" Mutar or Asur? Good Shabbos The story of Eliezer making the shidduch between Yitzchak and Rivka is one of the longest narratives in the entire Chumash. The Torah seems very repetitious in relating this narrative. The 67 pesukim of Perek 24 could have been written in a far more succinct fashion. Chazal comment on this and say, "Preferable is the casual conversation of the slaves of the Patriarchs than the Torah of the descendants." (Bereshis Rabbah 60:8). The Medrash says that some of the basic laws of tumah and taharah are derived from an extra letter vov written in the Torah, while the Torah is very elaborate regarding the discussions between Eliezer and Rivkah's father and brother.

Rav Aharon Kotler, zt"l, once commented that the reason for this phenomenon is that "Torah we can expound upon (ken mir darshinen) but appropriate human behavior—how to act properly—we must learn (ober middos daf men oys lernen). That is why the Torah spends so much time here telling us the story of Rivkah and Eliezer and Lavan, etc.

There are many lessons to be learned from this narrative. I just want to share one observation:

The pasuk states: "And Avraham said to his slave, the elder of his household, who controlled all that was his; 'Place now your hand under my thigh (which was a sign of taking an oath)." (Bereshis 24:2) Chazal expound upon the words "ha'moshel b'chol asher lo" (who controlled all that was his) by explaining that Eliezer controlled his evil inclination just as Avraham controlled his evil inclination. Eliezer was not just your average servant. He was one who ruled over all he had – he had total control over himself!

The Gemara expounds on the title the Torah gives to Eliezer – Damesek Eliezer (which on a simple reading means he came from Damascus) – to mean that he was doleh u'mashkeh m'toraso shel rabbo l'acheirim (he drew forth the Torah wisdom from his master and poured it out for others to drink). (Yoma 28b). Eliezer was a talmid muvhak (primary Torah disciple) of Avraham Avinu, and passed on Avraham Avinu's Torah teachings to others.

Most people are not moshel over themselves. They are subject to their tayvos and their passions. That was not Eliezer.

When Avraham gave Eliezer the mission to find a wife for his son Yitzchak from his ancestral home, Eliezer asked a question [Bereshis 24:5]: What if she does not want to come – am I allowed to take Yitzchak back to Padan Aram? Avraham responded in the negative – warning Eliezer not to take

Yitzchak back to Padan Aram. Eliezer's question began with the word "U-lie" (Perhaps).

Regarding this pasuk, the Medrash shares a famous teaching of Chazal: Canaan has false scales... (Hoshea 12:8). Chazal expound regarding this pasuk in Trei Asar that Canaan here refers to Eliezer. Chazal relate the word 'ooh-lye' (Perhaps) to 'ai-lye' (to me) and suggest that Eliezer really had in mind that Yitzchak should marry his own daughter. He was measuring the chances of getting Avraham's son Yitzchak as his own son-in-law! He was hoping that Rivka would not agree to come and that Avraham would be stuck with taking Eliezer's daughter as his daughter-in-law! For this plan, Chazal indict Eliezer and associate him with the pasuk in Trei Asar which castigates Canaan as one who has false scales. Chazal say that Avraham responds to Eliezer in a brutally frank fashion: "You (as a descendant of Canaan (Bereshis 9:25)) are cursed and my son is blessed and a cursed one cannot become attached to one who is blessed."

There are two lessons in this Chazal.

Lesson #1: Even though Chazal say that Eliezer ruled over his own evil inclination as much as Avraham ruled over his evil inclination, and even though he was known as Damesek Eliezer – who shared his master's Torah with others – nevertheless, the Medrash indicts him as one who goes about with "false scales." How can these two ideas be reconciled?

The answer is—and this is one of the scariest things in life—that such is the power of negiyus (personal bias). When a person has an ulterior motive, it can warp his entire perspective of everything. Negiyus is such a powerful emotion. When someone has a personal agenda, it can blind the most noble of people! He simply cannot see straight.

The Alter from Kelm explains this is the idea of "false scales" (moznei mirmah). It was not a gross desire to be wicked; rather it was like his scale of values was slightly off. A scale whose balance is slightly skewed will not be able to give an accurate measure. This occurs even in a person who is moshel b'chol asher lo – even as much as Avraham Avinu.

I always say that whenever someone hears someone say "I may be nogeyah but..." forget the rest of the sentence. People are simply not capable of overcoming their personal biases. The only hope a person has to not be influenced by his negiyus is seeking advice and counsel from someone else. That is why it is essential to have a chaver, a Rabbi, someone in life who you can turn to and ask "Am I looking at this objectively or not?"

Lesson #2: When Eliezer arrives, Lavan says "Bo, Baruch Hashem (Come O Blessed of Hashem)" (Bereshis 24:31). Chazal infer from this blessing that Eliezer, in reward for his faithful service of Avraham, emerged from the status of being Arur (cursed) to the status of being Baruch (Blessed).

How did this metamorphosis take place? Consider the following; How would you react if someone told you: You are Cursed. Your daughter is Pasul. She cannot marry my son or anyone else who is Blessed. After having heard such a blunt message – how would you react if this same person told you: "And by the way, now I want you to go look for an appropriate shidduch for my son." How would most people react?

Fine, one could say that Eliezer was a faithful servant and he would do it anyway despite the insult. But – would he do it with an enthusiasm? Would he do it with alacrity, as efficiently as possible? The natural reaction is, "You have just insulted me. I will take my sweet time finding a wife for your son! I will do it because it is my job, but do not expect me to be enthusiastic about the assignment after hearing such a put down!"

And yet Eliezer went about this mission with great zerizus, with great speed, diligence, and dedication. What happened to him? The answer is that he put his negiyus aside and he overcame that insult. "Okay. That is a fact of life. I am an Arur. But now you asked me to do a job and I will do that job to the best of my ability." Raising himself over his personal emotions and biases enabled Eliezer to leave the status of Arur and enter into the status of Baruch, as it is written "Bo, Baruch Hashem!"

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The Kindness of Strangers

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

In 1966 an eleven-year-old black boy moved with his parents and family to a white neighbourhood in Washington. Sitting with his two brothers and two sisters on the front step of the house, he waited to see how they would be greeted. They were not. Passers-by turned to look at them but no one gave them a smile or even a glance of recognition. All the fearful stories he had heard about how whites treated blacks seemed to be coming true. Years later, writing about those first days in their new home, he says, "I knew we were not welcome here. I knew we would not be liked here. I knew we would have no friends here. I knew we should not have moved here . . ."

As he was thinking those thoughts, a white woman coming home from work passed by on the other side of the road. She turned to the children and with a broad smile said, "Welcome!" Disappearing into the house, she emerged minutes later with a tray laden with drinks and sandwiches which she brought over to the children, making them feel at home. That moment – the young man later wrote – changed his life. It gave him a sense of belonging where there was none before. It made him realise, at a time when race relations in the United States were still fraught, that a black family could feel at home in a white area and that there could be relationships that were colour-blind. Over the years, he learned to admire much about the woman across the street, but it was that first spontaneous act of greeting that became, for him, a definitive memory. It broke down a wall of separation and turned strangers into friends.

The young man, Stephen Carter, eventually became a law professor at Yale and wrote a book about what he learned that day. He called it Civility.[1] The name of the woman, he tells us, was Sara Kestenbaum, and she died all too young. He adds that it was no coincidence that she was a religious Jew. "In the Jewish tradition," he notes, such civility is called chessed – "the doing of acts of kindness – which is in turn derived from the understanding that human beings are made in the image of God." Civility, he adds, "itself may be seen as part of chessed: it does indeed require kindnesses toward our fellow citizens, including the ones who are strangers, and even when it is hard." To this day, he adds, "I can close my eyes and feel on my tongue the smooth, slick sweetness of the cream cheese and jelly sandwiches that I gobbled on that summer afternoon when I discovered how a single act of genuine and unassuming civility can change a life forever." [2]

I never knew Sara Kestenbaum, but years after I had read Carter's book I gave a lecture to the Jewish community in the part of Washington where she had lived. I told them Carter's story, which they had not heard before. But they nodded in recognition. "Yes," one said, "that's the kind of thing Sara would do."

Something like this thought was surely in the mind of Abraham's servant, unnamed in the text but traditionally identified as Eliezer, when he arrived at Nahor in Aram Naharaim, northwest Mesopotamia, to find a wife for his master's son. Abraham had not told him to look for any specific traits of character. He had simply told him to find someone from his own extended family. Eliezer, however, formulated a test:

Lord, God of my master Abraham, make me successful today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. May it be

that when I say to a young woman, 'Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too'—let her be the one You have chosen for Your servant Isaac. By this I will know that You have shown kindness [chessed] to my master." (Gen. 24:12-14)

His use of the word chessed here is no accident, for it is the very characteristic he is looking for in the future wife of the first Jewish child, Isaac, and he found it in Rebecca.

It is the theme, also, of the book of Ruth. It is Ruth's kindness to Naomi, and Boaz's to Ruth, that Tanach seeks to emphasise in sketching the background to David, their great-grandson, who would become Israel's greatest King. Indeed the Sages said that the three characteristics most important to Jewish character are modesty, compassion, and kindness.[3] Chessed, what I have defined elsewhere as "love as deed,"[4] is central to the Jewish value system. The Sages based it on the acts of God himself. Rav Simlai taught:

"The Torah begins with an act of kindness and ends with an act of kindness. It begins with God clothing the naked – "The Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skin and clothed them," (Gen. 3:21) – and it ends with Him caring for the dead: "And He [God] buried [Moses] in the Valley." (Deut. 34:6). (Talmud Bavli, Sotah 14a)

Chessed – providing shelter for the homeless, food for the hungry, assistance to the poor; visiting the sick, comforting mourners and providing a dignified burial for all – became constitutive of Jewish life. During the many centuries of exile and dispersion Jewish communities were built around these needs. There were chevrot, "friendly societies," for each of them.

In seventeenth-century Rome, for example, there were seven societies dedicated to the provision of clothes, shoes, linen, beds and warm winter bed coverings for children, the poor, widows and prisoners. There were two societies providing trousseaus, dowries, and the loan of jewellery to poor brides. There was one for visiting the sick, another bringing help to families who had suffered bereavement, and others to perform the last rites for those who had died – purification before burial, and the burial service itself. Eleven fellowships existed for educational and religious aims, study and prayer, another raised alms for Jews living in the Holy Land, and others were involved in the various activities associated with the circumcision of newborn boys. Yet others provided the poor with the means to fulfil commands such as mezuzot for their doors, oil for the Chanukah lights, and candles for the Sabbath.[5]

Chessed, said the Sages, is in some respects higher even than tzedakah: Our masters taught: loving-kindness [chessed] is greater than charity [tzedakah] in three ways. Charity is done with one's money, while loving-kindness may be done with one's money or with one's person. Charity is done only to the poor, while loving-kindness may be given both to the poor and to the rich. Charity is given only to the living, while loving-kindness may be shown to the living and the dead. (Talmud Bavli, Succah 49b)

Chessed in its many forms became synonymous with Jewish life and one of the pillars on which it stood. Jews performed kindnesses to one another because it was "the way of God" and also because they or their families had had intimate experience of suffering and knew they had nowhere else to turn. It provided an access of grace in dark times. It softened the blow of the loss of the Temple and its rites:

Once, as R. Yohanan was walking out of Jerusalem, R. Joshua followed him. Seeing the Temple in ruins, R. Joshua cried, "Woe to us that this place is in ruins, the place where atonement was made for Israel's iniquities." R. Yohanan said to him: "My son, do not grieve, for we have another means of atonement which is no less effective. What is it? It is deeds of loving-kindness, about which Scripture says, 'I desire loving-kindness and not sacrifice'" (Hosea 6:6).[6]

Through chessed, Jews humanised fate as, they believed, God's chessed humanises the world. As God acts towards us with love, so we are called on to act lovingly to one another. The world does not operate solely on the basis of impersonal principles like power or justice, but also on the deeply personal basis of vulnerability, attachment, care and concern, recognising us as individuals with unique needs and potentialities.

It also added a word to the English language. In 1535 Myles Coverdale published the first-ever translation of the Hebrew Bible into English (the work had been begun by William Tyndale who paid for it with his life, burnt at the stake in 1536). It was when he came to the word *chessed* that he realised that there was no English word which captured its meaning. It was then that, to translate it, he coined the word "loving-kindness."

The late Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel used to say, "When I was young I admired cleverness. Now that I am old I find I admire kindness more." There is deep wisdom in those words. It is what led Eliezer to choose Rebecca to become Isaac's wife and thus the first Jewish bride. Kindness brings redemption to the world and, as in the case of Stephen Carter, it can change lives. Wordsworth was right when he wrote that the, "Best portion of a good man's [and woman's] life" is their "little, nameless, unremembered, acts

Of kindness and of love."^[7]

[1] Stephen Carter, *Civility*, New York: Basic Books, 1999, pp. 61-75.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

[3] *Bamidbar Rabbah* 8:4.

[4] Jonathan Sacks, *To Heal a Fractured World*, pp. 44-56.

[5] Israel Abrahams, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*, London, Edward Goldston, 1932, pp. 348-363.

[6] *Avot de-Rabbi Natan*, 4.

[7] From Wordsworth's poem, 'Tintern Abbey'.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ztz"l was a global religious leader, philosopher, the author of more than 25 books, and the moral voice for our time. Until 1st September 2013 he served as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, having held the position for 22 years. To read more from Rabbi Sacks, please visit www.rabbisacks.org

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date: Oct 27, 2021, 2:49 PM

subject: Re: Mitzvah Connection - Parshas Chaye Sarah - EPHRON

During Torah's detailed discussion of Avraham's negotiations for the burial site, the name EPHRON is spelled Malei (with the Vav) except for one occasion when the name appears Chasser. Why? The Mitzvah Connection enhances explanations by scholars.

Kol Tuv, Mike

Subject: Mitzvah Connection - Parshas Chaye Sarah - EPHRON

The following is a Mitzvah Connection from Parshas Chaye Sarah :

EPHRON ---

Sarah dies. (23:2) Avraham comes to eulogize and bewail her. He needs to properly bury Sarah and intends to purchase the MeOras HaMachpela, a cave he had become aware of earlier from which wafted a sweet fragrance and where he had experienced a vision of dazzling light. He recognized the cave contained the graves of Adam and Chava and, from then on, was determined to obtain the site as the burial place for himself and his family. Rav Elie Munk, in *Kol HaTorah* (23:8), explains why Avraham was so anxious to acquire the burial place of Adam and Eve as a FAMILY POSSESSION IN PERPETUITY. The mission of Adam had failed with the original sin and, so the ideal plan for all humanity had failed. Avraham was the first to attempt to repair this flaw and to fulfill this calling for humanity via the Divine commandments addressed to the Jewish people and, via this, to all men. Says Rav Munk: "This universal character was of the utmost importance for the patriarch. It determined the choice of burial place for Avraham AND HIS FAMILY. Avraham considered himself the successor and repository of Adam's mission, and he did not hesitate to pay any price... in order to assure himself of ownership of the cave wherein the first couple lay buried."

Avraham approaches the B'nai Chais, the City Council of the Hittites, with tact and diplomacy, even bowing respectfully several times, and asks that they intercede with EPHRON Ben Tzochar, the owner of the Machpela Cave and the field in which it was situated, to sell the Cave to him as a burial site.

Avraham was anxious to conclude the purchase in public in order to ensure that the acquisition would not be invalidated or encumbered by other claims. EPHRON was present in the assemblage of the Hittite city council, having just been elevated as a Hittite leader (because Hashem wanted Avraham to deal with a person of importance).

In a public discussion with EPHRON, Avraham negotiates the deal. (23:10-18) he agrees to pay the spectacular price of 400 Silver Shekels, "Over LaSocher" - in Negotiable Currency - a sum and coinage acceptable everywhere. These were not ordinary Shekels (normally meaning, Selas) but, rather "Centenaria" (a Centenarium being equivalent to 100 Selas). Avraham willingly overpays the value so that no one would question the validity of the transaction or the voluntary nature of the sale by EPHRON. Indeed, as Rav Munk observes, "The last verses of the chapter contain nothing other than an exact description of the location of the Cave of Machpelah and a reminder that Avraham AND HIS OFFSPRING WOULD HAVE PERPETUAL TITLE TO IT." (23:17-18)

At 23:20, Torah says: "Thus, the field with its cave confirmed as Avraham's AS AN ESTATE FOR A BURIAL SITE, from the children of Cheis."

Torah's description of Avraham's negotiation with EPHRON mentions the latter's name often (see, e.g., 23:8, 10 (twice), 13, 14, 16 (twice), 17). On all occasions the name EPHRON is written "Malei", full, with the letter "Vav", save one. In 23:16, the second time EPHRON is mentioned the name is written "Chasser", incomplete so to speak, i.e., minus the "Vav". This textual anomaly does not go unnoticed by Chazal. The name EPHRON minus the "Vav", in Gemmatria, equals 400. In this context, when written Chasser, Torah tells us that Avraham actually paid out to EPHRON the price he had mentioned publicly -- 400 Silver Shekels. (23:16) Thus, the number 400 figures quite prominently in this historic transaction.

As Rav Yisroel Reisman observes in his interesting article, "The 400th Blow", *The Jewish Observer*, pp. 18-21 (Feb. 1986), the number 400 appears to be significant in a number of Biblical contexts. Thus, 400 in Gemmatria is the numerical equivalent to the term AYIN RA - the Evil Eye. Eisav, Bilaam, Nevuchadnezzar, and even Satan are said to take their destructive powers from this mysterious force. EPHRON's name spelled without the "Vav" has the numerical value of 400 -- related to EPHRON's AYIN RA and, consequently, the exorbitant price Avraham paid for the Cave of Machpela -- 400 Silver Shekels "Over LaSocher". Rav Reisman also notes, for example, that "Yedai Eisav" has the numerical value of 400 symbolizing his mastery of using AYIN RA to destroy, hence Yaakov's gifts to Eisav were sent to "satisfy his eyes". (Note also that Eisav comes to Yaakov with a force of 400 Men).

The Mitzvah Connection

From the standpoint of a Mitzvah Connection, EPHRON written Chasser (minus the "Vav") also is dramatically significant. Mitzvah Number 400 is the Mitzvah of NACHALAH -- Inheritance. It is found in *Bamidbar* 27:8 -- "If A Man Dies And Has No Son..." (Ish Ki Yamus Uvein Ein Lo). It is a Mitzvah to implement the laws pertaining to inheritance. The sons of the deceased equally divide his possessions -- except for the first-born, who receives a double portion. The rights of daughters and other relatives when a person dies without sons is spelled out in the laws of NACHALAH. Sefer HaChinuch (at Mitzvah Number 400) says that the root of the precept is that a man should know and consider that the world lies in the power of a Divine Master, by Whose good will and desire, each person gains possession of the share of property that he attains in the world. Hashem's gift should continue to extend further, of itself, "to the body that developed in continuity from him, this being his son or his daughter."

The painful ordeal Avraham underwent in successfully negotiating for and acquiring the Machpela site from the Ayin Ra- influenced EPHRON was intended to obtain and secure a uniquely holy place as a NACHALAH, an inheritance, that Avraham's offspring would have perpetual title to it. Torah explicitly closes the episode (at 23:19-20) with a detailed description of the site and its location, declaring it "Confirmed As Avraham's As An Estate

For A Burial Site ...". (VaYokom HaSadeh VeHameOrah Asher Bo LeAvraham LeAchuzas Kever) The Mitzvah Connection on the name EPHRON (written Chasser) is quite strong . Indeed, Avraham's offspring, Yitzchak and Yaakov, merited to be buried there as a right of NACHALAH.

Michael Hoenig

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RABBI YITZCHOK HISIGER, EDITOR

IN EVERY SITUATION

Rav Shach on Chumash from Rav Elazar Menachem Man Shach, written by Rav Asher Bergman

Grant me an estate for a burial site with you, that I may bury my dead from before me (23:4).

"Our Torah is a living Torah," Rav Elazar Menachem Man Shach remarked, "with practical lessons for us in every situation in life. The Midrash, for instance, tells us that when Rebbi prepared himself for a meeting with Roman officials, he would review the story of the encounter between Yaakov and Eisav (the progenitor of the Romans) and take his inspiration from that passage.

"Similarly, we can learn several lessons from the way Avraham Avinu set out to purchase the Machpelah Cave for Sarah's burial, described in Parshas Chayeis Sarah. At first he sought permission from the town's residents to be granted the right to bury his wife altogether (v. 4). Next he requested of the townsmen that they speak to Ephron and persuade him to agree to the sale of the Cave (v. 8). Seeing that he was reluctant to sell the Cave alone without the surrounding field (v. 11), Avraham offered to buy the field as well (v. 13). Then, as soon as he heard that the price for the field was 400 shekels, he immediately weighed out the specified sum, using the most acceptable and valuable type of currency (v. 16). He made sure to do this while the townsmen were still assembled, so that there would never be any possibility of appeal or denial of the sale. (This analysis of the story is based on the Ralbag's commentary.)

This careful, deliberate approach to a purchase provides us with valuable instruction for our own business dealings. There is nothing that is not alluded to in the Torah.

"The Chofetz Chaim was known to be an extremely wise person, with knowledge and insights in all walks of life. This is because, in every situation, he conducted himself according to the lessons provided to us by the Torah. The Torah was the source of all his wisdom!"

MIRACLES AREN'T ENOUGH

Kol Rom - Rav Moshe On Chumash from **RAV MOSHE FEINSTEIN**
ZT"ל, compiled by Rabbi Avraham Shlomo Fishelis, adapted by Rabbi Avrohom Biderman

The servant ran towards her and said, "Let me sip, if you please, a little water from your jug" (24:17).

Why did Eliezer run toward Rivkah? Rashi cites the Midrash that he saw the water rise as she approached. Upon seeing the miracle, he ran toward her. But once he saw this open miracle, why did he still have to test her by asking her for a drink?

The reason is that miracles do not really tell us about a person. In fact, miracles can happen even to wicked people. For example, even the exceedingly wicked Nevuchadnetzar, who destroyed the Beis HaMikdash, was rewarded for enforcing Hashem's will. Certainly, an ordinary person might experience a miracle for a good deed that he had done.

Although it seemed that she was righteous, Eliezer still had to test whether she was truly good and kind.

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Unconditional Chesed

By **Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser** - 22 Heshvan 5782 – October 28, 2021

"The servant [Eliezer] ran towards her [Rivka] and said: Let me sip, if you please, a little water from your jug." (Bereishis 24:17)

Sent to Charan to find a wife for Yitzchak, Eliezer encounters Rivka at the well. Rashi comments on this pasuk that Eliezer saw that the waters of the well had miraculously risen towards her (and she did not have to draw the water herself).

The well-known question arises: Once Eliezer witnessed this amazing miracle, why wasn't that sufficient to understand that his prayers had been answered, and Rivka was a suitable wife for Yitzchak? After all, we learn (Shabbos 32a) that a meritorious act is brought about through a meritorious person. Why did Eliezer have to proceed with his predetermined requirement, and specifically ask her for a drink?

The Brisker Rav cites the Bais Aharon of Karlin who explains that the home of Avraham Avinu was established on chesed. Since that was the foundation of his home, only a woman whose being was suffused with the characteristic of chesed would be a suitable wife for Yitzchak, and that was not a quality that could be discerned with a miracle.

Moreover, Eliezer was seeking a woman with the middah of unconditional chesed that included mesiras nefesh. In expounding on the pasuk in Vayeira (18:1) that Hashem appeared to Avraham in the heat of the day, our Sages tell us (Bava Metzia 86b) that it was the third day after Avraham Avinu's bris milah, and Hashem removed the sun from its sheath, i.e. it was extraordinarily hot, so that Avraham should not be bothered with guests. But Avraham longed to have guests, so he sent out his servant Eliezer to see if there were any passersby. Eliezer said there were none, and Avraham did not believe him, so he went out himself. There he saw Hashem standing at the entrance to his tent. Here was a 99-year-old man in a weakened state, experiencing the height of the pain of the bris milah on the third day, amid a heat wave, yet he was fiercely determined to do chesed for a wayfarer. It was this standard of chesed, performed with mesiras nefesh, that Eliezer set as a criterion for the wife of Yitzchak.

Chesed is the bedrock of the world, as it says (Tehillim 89:3), "The world is built on kindness." One who does chesed is not only performing a mitzvah but he is helping to build the world. Additionally, man's act of kindness in and of itself can awaken Divine compassion and ward off Divine retribution (Sanhedrin 103b). It is noted that when HaGaon R' Aharon Leib Shteinman was asked by a petitioner how he could merit a refuah shleimah, it was suggested that he should do the chesed of hachnosas orchim, inviting a poor person into his home or paying for his food. Avraham Avinu, too, sought to access this opportunity for healing from his bris milah.

A Child's Hospitality

The great R' Aryeh Levine used to visit the hospitals and wish every person a refuah shleimah. Once, when he came to the Bikur Cholim Hospital, he found that one of the staff members, a well-known tzaddik, R' Yosef, was very sick. R' Aryeh sat down near him and tried to speak to him. Suddenly the patient lost consciousness. R' Aryeh called the doctor and staff to revive the patient. They worked for over two hours until R' Yosef was stabilized. R' Aryeh, who had remained nearby the entire time, asked R' Yosef what had happened.

The tzaddik recounted how he had been brought before the Heavenly Court. Hundreds and thousands of angels dressed in white appeared before the Court and said that they had been created from the different mitzvos the tzaddik had done. Afterwards, angels who had been created from his aveiros came in, dressed in black. One said the tzaddik hadn't prayed properly, one said he had eaten something that was prohibited when he was a child, and other such transgressions were cited.

When the aveiros for which he hadn't done teshuvah were tallied, his merits and transgressions were equal. As his verdict was debated, one of the prominent rabbis in Yerushalayim who had been on the vaad of the Bikur Cholim/Chevra Kadisha and had passed away some years ago, entered. Upon his entrance, all the judges rose in his honor, and asked why he had

come. He explained that he had heard that they were judging R' Yosef whom he knew very well, because R' Yosef had been one of the people on the staff when he himself had been head of the committee. He now wanted to testify on behalf of R' Yosef that he was a very truthful and honest person.

It was decided that since his rov had spoken so highly of him they would allow him to go back to the world to correct his wrongdoings.

R' Yosef wandered over mountains and through valleys trying to find his way back to the world when he heard a voice call out to him, "R' Yosef!" He saw a man sitting on one of the mountains; the man asked R' Yosef if he remembered him.

R' Yosef responded that he didn't remember him.

The man reminded R' Yosef that he had lived in the city where R' Yosef lived as a young boy. Every Shabbos, the people of the town would invite guests, but no one wanted to invite this man because they thought that he ate too much. He therefore had nowhere to eat.

Once, R' Yosef and his father were the last two people to leave shul, and R' Yosef pleaded with his father to bring the man home. At first, his father was reluctant, but finally, he agreed and that Shabbos the man ate at their home. When he left on Motzoei Shabbos, the man had told R' Yosef that one day he would repay him for his kindness. But they never met again, and the man had been unable to repay him.

Now he sees R' Yosef wandering, and he wanted to know what he could do for him.

R' Yosef explained that he was trying to get back to this world and was unable to find the way.

The man showed him the way, R' Yosef concluded, and here he was, back in his hospital bed.

from: Project Genesis <genesis@torah.org> to: weekly-halacha@torah.org
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Weekly Halacha

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Parshas Chayei Sarah

Honoring Parents: Basic Requirements

The sensitivity that one must have in performing the mitzvah of kibbud av v'eim, honoring one's parents, is expressed in our Sages' comment on the verse quoted above. The Rabbis[1] criticize Yosef for not objecting to hearing his revered father described as "your servant, our father." Even though Yosef was not at liberty to reveal his identity at the time, he is nevertheless faulted for not being offended by the desecration of his father's honor. This teaches us that it is not enough to merely honor and fear one's parents in their presence. Even when they are not physically present, we are commanded to see that their honor is not compromised in any way. Let us explain:

There are two major categories under which the halachos of conduct towards parents are subsumed: kibbud, honoring them, and mora, revering them.

Kibbutz Av V'eim—Honoring Parents

Kibbutz is accomplished in three different ways:

1. Through the children's thoughts—children are supposed to view their parents as being honorable and respected people, even if they are not considered as such in the eyes of others. This attitudinal aspect of the mitzvah is the main part of kibbutz[2].

2. Through the children's actions—this includes feeding, dressing and escorting them, and generally assisting them in all of their needs as a servant would do for his master. These actions must be done b'sever panim yafos, pleasantly and enthusiastically. The manner in which one assists parents is a crucial aspect of the mitzvah[3]. Even if the child is in the midst of learning Torah, he must stop to assist his parents[4].

3. Through the children's speech—e.g., when a child is honored, he should credit his parents for the honor bestowed upon him. When a child asks others to grant his request or to do him a favor, he should not request it in his own merit, but rather, in the merit of his father or mother (when applicable[5]).

Parents may excuse[6] their children from the mitzvah of kibbutz. In fact, it is

advisable for them to do so. A parent who constantly exacts respect from his children will surely cause his children to be punished on his account[7]. Consequently, although according to the halachah[8] a child should rise to his full height when a parent enters[9] the room[10], in practice this halachah is not widely observed. It is safe to assume that most parents excuse their children from demonstrating this honor towards them[11], and since they do, the children are not obligated to rise in their honor[12]. It is required though, that children ask their parents explicitly if they excuse them from demonstrating this kibbutz[13].

Reciting Kaddish after a parent's death falls into the category of kibbutz[14]. Consequently, some poskim rule that a parent may excuse his child from saying Kaddish after his passing[15]. But other poskim hold that the son should ignore his father's request and recite Kaddish[16].

The twelve-month mourning period in which children mourn their parents is a form of kibbutz[17]. Parents may, therefore, absolve their children from keeping the laws of the twelve-month mourning period[18].

Mora Av V'eim—Revering Parents

The second category of the halachos governing the conduct of children to parents is mora, reverence, or fear. It means that one should act towards his parents as he would towards a sovereign with the power to punish those who treat him disrespectfully[19]. Specifically, this commandment prohibits a child from sitting in his parents' set places at home or in shul, interrupting them, contradicting them (in an abrupt or disrespectful manner) and calling them by their first names[20].

Most poskim maintain that parents may also excuse their children from the mitzvah of mora[21]. Consequently, some parents permit their children to sit in their father's place in shul, since parents are not particular about this show of respect[22]. Similarly, if a parent solicits his child's opinion, the child may express his honest opinion even if it differs from the parent's[23], since by soliciting his child's opinion the parent waives his right not to be contradicted.

Parents may not, however, allow themselves to be degraded, hit or cursed by their children. Such actions are never excusable[24].

Even if a parent is, G-d forbid, insane and has embarrassed the child in public, it is still forbidden for the child to shame or degrade the parent[25]. He may, however, take steps to ensure that his parents do not cause him or themselves public embarrassment, e.g., one may arrange to have his parents barred from a public gathering, etc[26].

When an elderly father lives with his son, the son is not required to give up his seat at the head of the table[27], although the custom in many homes is to do so[28]. In any case, the son must allow his father to wash his hands first and to be served first[29], etc.

A son should preferably not daven Shemoneh Esrei within four amos [approximately eight feet] of his father[30].

If her husband objects, a married woman is not required to honor her parents by performing the physical acts that constitute "honor," such as feeding them, escorting them, etc. She is, however, obligated to revere them and to avoid demeaning them[31].

Obedience

In general, children should honor a parent's wish even if the parent does not "benefit" from the child's compliance. For instance, a mother disapproves of a certain article of clothing and asks her daughter not to wear it. By honoring her mother's request the daughter gives her mother no tangible, material benefit, so the laws of kibbutz do not apply[32]. But if the daughter disobeys and insists on wearing that article of clothing, she is violating her mother's wishes which may be forbidden under the obligation of mora, reverence[33]. Still, the poskim are in agreement that when the parent's request will cause the child a financial loss, significant pain or anguish, or will interfere with the child's Torah studies, the child need not obey. A child is not considered to have violated his parent's wish when he does so for a legitimate reason (and the parent does not stand to gain any material "benefit" from the child's compliance). Thus there are many cases when children may not be halachically required to follow a parent's directive. Some of those include

when and where to study Torah[34] or daven[35], whom to marry[36] and whether or not to live in Eretz Yisrael[37].

Obviously, though, a child should realize that it is invariably in his best interest to heed the wise and loving advice of his experienced parents. A decision not to abide by a parent's wishes should be made only after much thought and after consultation with a competent halachic authority.

1. Sotah 13b.

2. Chayei Adam 67:3. See explanation in Sichos Mussar (5731, Ma'amar 22).

3. Y.D. 240:4.

4. Pischei Teshuvah 240:8; Rav S.Z. Auerbach (oral ruling quoted in Kibbutz v'Yiras Horim K'hilchasan, pg. 25).

5. Y.D. 240:5; Chayei Adam 67:5.

6. The parents may change their mind and revoke their dispensation; Maharam Shick, Y.D. 218.

7. Y.D. 240:19. See Alei Shur, pg. 261 for elaboration.

8. This is a Biblical obligation; Rosh, Kiddushin 1:57. There are various views in the poskim as to how many times per day this obligation applies; see Chayei Adam 67:7; Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:24; Shevet ha-Levi 1:111-4; Avnei Yashfei 1:185.

9. According to some poskim, the obligation to stand up for a parent begins when the child hears their footsteps; see Gilyon Mahertha, Y.D. 240:7 and Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:24. But many other poskim rule that the obligation begins only upon seeing them; see Chayei Adam 67:7; Chazon Ish, Y.D. 149:10; Shevet ha-Levi 2:111-4.

10. Y.D. 240:7. This is an obligation of kibbutz; Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:24; Chazon Ish, Y.D. 149:4; Gesher ha-Chayim 20:9.

11. See Sefer Chasidim 152 and 339.

12. Even when parents have exempted their children from honoring them, if the children honor them they are fulfilling a mitzvah; Rav Akiva Eiger and Pischei Teshuvah, Y.D. 240:16.

13. Rav Y.S. Elyashiv, quoted in Avnei Yashfei 1:185 and in Mora ha-Horim v'Kibbutz, pg. 49.

14. Chayei Adam 67:6.

15. Pischei Teshuvah, Y.D. 344:1, quoting Even Shoam.

16. See Shoel u'Meishiv 3:259, Even Yaakov 47 and Yabia Omer 6, Y.D. 31-4.

17. See Igros Moshe, Y.D. 1:255.

18. Shach, Y.D. 244:9; Chochmas Adam 155:10; Gilyon Mahertha, Y.D. 240:9. Sedei Chemed, Aveilus 1. See Divrei Malkiel 4:96 who disagrees.

19. Rambam, Sefer ha-Mitzvos 211.

20. Y.D. 240:2.

21. Birkei Yosef 240:13. See also Igros Moshe, Y.D. 1:133.

22. Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:9.

23. Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:13.

24. Teshuvos Rivash 220; Meishiv Davar 2:50. See Minchas Shelomo 1:32.

25. Y.D. 240:8-10.

26. Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:32. See Tzitz Eliezer 12:59.

27. Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:11.

28. She'arim ha-Metzuyanim B'halachah 143:2. Rav S.Z. Auerbach, Rav Y.S. Elyashiv and Rav C.P. Scheinberg are quoted (Mora ha-Horim v'Kibbutz, pg. 19; Kibbutz v'Yiras Horim K'hilchasan, pg. 62) as ruling that it is proper for the son to offer his seat to his father. If the father declines, then the son may sit there.

29. Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:11; Rav Y.S. Elyashiv and Rav B.Z. Abba Shaul (oral ruling quoted in Mora ha-Horim v'Kibbutz, pg. 19).

30. O.C. 90:24 and Mishnah Berurah 73, 77, 78. See Beiur Halachah, s.v. vaf al pi.

31. Y.D. 240:17, Shach 19 and Aruch ha-Shulchan 38. See, however, Tzitz Eliezer 16:28.

32. This is the position of most poskim; see The Fifth Commandment, pg. 126, for the entire list.

33. Based on Hamakne, Kidushim 31b and Teshuvos Rav Akiva Eiger 1:68.

34. Y.D. 240:13 and Pischei Teshuvah 8. See Minchas Yitzchak 5:79 and Koveitz Teshuvos 3:139.

35. Pischei Teshuvah, Y.D. 240:22, quoting Chamudei Doniel.

36. Rama, Y.D. 240:25.

37. See Tzitz Eliezer 14:72 and Yechaveh Da'as 3:69 and 4:49.

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Subject: Drasha - The Rising Waters of Menschlichkeit

To: <drasha@torah.org>

Drasha

By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Parshas Chayei Sarah

The Rising Waters of Menschlichkeit

Avraham [Abraham] sent his servant Eliezer on quite a difficult mission. Find a shidduch [match] for not only the world's most eligible bachelor, but for its most spiritual. Yitzchak [Issac] was designated by Hashem to be offered as a sacrifice. He never left the land that would one day become Israel. And he was raised by the founders of Judaism, Avraham and Sarah. It isn't easy to find a match for such a special individual. Avraham made Eliezer promise that he would not bring back a Cannanite woman for his son. Instead, Eliezer was to search among Avraham's family in Charan and find a suitable maiden for the sacrosanct young man.

Laden with gifts, Eliezer left for Charan. As a selection criteria he devised a sure-fire approach. "Avraham," he thought, "is the epitome of kindness and hospitality. Surely Avraham would want those qualities prevalent in his daughter-in-law." He prayed to Hashem to guide him. "When I arrive in Charan, I will ask a maiden for water. The maiden," he thought, "who replies by saying, 'drink, and I shall even give your camels to drink, [and drawing water for camels who had just completed a long desert journey is no simple task]' must be the one who is designated for Yitzchak." (Genesis 24:13-14) The exact scenario that had been prayed for actually occurred. As Eliezer stood by the well in Charan, Rivka [Rebecca] walked toward it. The posuk (verse) tells us that as soon as Eliezer watched Rivka begin to draw water, he raced toward her and asked her the pre-determined questions. The gracious response led to our destiny.

The Medrash questions why Eliezer raced forward to greet Rivka. It answers that as Rivka went to draw water, Eliezer saw a miraculous event. As she lowered her bucket, the waters in the well rose to greet her. Therefore Eliezer ran to greet this maiden, as this was a spiritual individual who must truly be Yitzchak's bashert (pre-ordained).

Yet, if such a miraculous event occurred, why did Eliezer continue with his pre-planned act? Why did he ask Rivka for water and wait until she responded by offering drinks to both him and his entourage? Also, when Eliezer discusses the entire scenario with Rivka's family and tells them why he decided upon Rivka, he repeats the story of Rivka's grace and hospitality. Yet Eliezer fails to mention of the miraculous incident of the rising waters. In the Slobodka Yeshiva, nothing was as important as the study of Torah. Students who excelled in their diligence and ability were viewed in awe. But the greatest reverence was saved for the founder of the Yeshiva, Rabbi Nosson Zvi Finkel, the Alter [Sage] of Slobodka (1849-1927). With his brilliance, humility and great character, he set the tone of the entire Yeshiva. One day two students were discussing a new young man, Isaac Sher, who had just entered the Yeshiva. "Isaac is a true ilui (prodigy)," said one. "He knows the entire Shas (Talmud) and Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish Law), by heart."

After the other boy listened as the first extolled the intellectual virtues of Isaac Sher he added meekly, "I had a conversation with him the other day. He is truly a geshmahkeh mentch (man of character and charm)."

"Geshmahkeh mentch?" questioned the first student in a scoffing tone. "Is that all you can say about him? We are talking about the greatest mind ever to step foot in this Yeshiva and all you can say that he is a decent and kind fellow? I see you don't appreciate a person's true value."

With that the disgusted student began to walk away, but the towering presence of the Alter of Slobodka blocked his path.

"No," he said firmly as he motioned to the humiliated student. "That young man is correct. Reb Isaac's greatest quality is that he is a geshmahkeh mentch."

The Alter eventually took Reb Isaac Sher as his son-in-law.

Eliezer was emotionally impressed by the miraculous rising waters; however,

he composed himself. Miracles were not the criteria needed to become Yitzchak's wife. He knew that character transcends any miracle or genius. In finding the wife of a patriarch and mother of a nation he did not look for Rivka the miracle worker. He looked, and found, the geshmahkeh mentch.

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subject: Chayeis Sarah

Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Chayeis Sarah

By Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

חטא ב פרשת ח"י שרה

קבר אברהם את שרה אשתו אל מערת שוזה המכפלת... היא חברון

Avraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpeilah... which is Chevron. (23:19)

The Meoras Ha'Machpeilah is the final resting place of four couples: Adam/Chavah; Avraham/Sarah; Yitzchak/Rivkah; Yaakov/Leah. As such, it is sacred ground which no one has penetrated and returned to report about. There was, however, one person who went, entered and even, exited – Horav Avraham Azulai, zl, author of the Chessed L'Avraham, great-grandfather of the Chida, zl. The story took place in 1643, in the city of Chevron. The sultan of the Ottoman Empire decided to visit the many places of distinction that were part of his vast empire. Chevron, which is home to the Meoras Ha'Machpeilah, was one of his stops. He entered the cave adorned in his royal garb, including his unique golden, diamond studded sword which hung at his side. He went from room to room, finally entering the huge hall named after Yitzchak Avinu. The center of attraction in the Yitzchak hall is a small circular hole in the floor, which is considered to be the most sacred spot in the entire structure, since it leads down into the caves/burial place themselves. People would come from all over the world just to stand and pray at this hole, which according to tradition was excavated/created by Adam HaRishon.

The sultan leaned over the aperture and peered down into the hole. As he bent over, his precious sword became loose and tumbled through the opening. When the sultan heard the clang of metal hit the ground of the cave, he realized that his sword was now in the mysterious burial place of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs. He wanted his sword retrieved. He ordered the officer of the guard to send down a soldier to bring back the sword. Not one to waste the sultan's time, the officer immediately dispatched a soldier through the hole, after first tying a strong rope around his body. No sooner had the soldier been lowered when they heard piercing screams coming from the cave below. They pulled up the soldier, who was no longer alive!

The sultan kept on sending soldiers down into the hole – with the same result: no sword, and another dead soldier. The sultan had little concern for his soldiers. He just wanted his sword back. Finally, the officers suggested, "Since there are so many Jews in Chevron let one of them descend into the hole. Why should our soldiers die?" Word was sent to the Jews that the sultan expected one of them to retrieve his sword. No Jew was prepared to forfeit his life. The sultan "sweetened" the deal when he said, "Unless a Jew descends and retrieves my sword, the entire Jewish community will pay with their lives!" Sadly, this is the type of tyranny under which we had lived throughout our exile.

Not willing to put anyone's life in danger, the elderly Rav of Chevron, the Kabbalist, Rav Avraham Azulai said that he would go down. "I have no fear," he said. Rav Azulai prayed passionately for guidance and success, and dressed in his white tachrichim, burial shrouds, he then set forth for the cave. With a rope tied around his waist, the elderly Rav was lowered down to the ground of the cave. He was met by three bearded men, who "introduced" themselves as the Patriarchs. Rav Avraham was in total shock. "Why should I leave here?" he asked. "I am old. I have come face to face with my Patriarchs. I desire to stay here with you."

The Patriarchs replied, "You must return the sultan's sword or the entire

Jewish community of Chevron will be annihilated. However, have no fear, for in another seven days you will return here to be with us."

The Rav returned to a hero's welcome. After returning the sword to the sultan, he quickly went to his shul where he spent the next week transmitting to his students all of the esoteric teachings of the Torah. He learned with them night and day, imparting to them all that he knew. Seven days after entering the cave of Machpeilah, Rav Avraham Azulai was called "Home," returning his lofty soul to its Heavenly Source. He was buried in the ancient Chevron cemetery, overlooking the final resting place of our Patriarchs.

ותאמר שתה וגו' גמליך אשקה

And she said, "Drink, and I will even water your camels." (24:46)

Rivkah is lauded for her incredible sensitivity and kindness in offering water to Eliezer. This was the finishing touch upon which her selection to be Yitzchak Avinu's wife was predicated. Imagine, someone has been wearily trudging through the sun-baked wilderness. His throat is parched; he is sweating profusely. He badly needs water. Would the person who reaches out to him with a jug of water be considered especially kind or, simply a decent human being? Horav Eliyahu Dushnitzer, zl, explains that Rivkah's greatness shone forth when she offered to water the camels as well. Eliezer had asked for a drink for himself. Rivkah immediately poured him a drink and then offered to provide water for his ten camels! Camels drink a lot. To provide for them meant running back and forth to the well numerous times. It was this sensitivity to others – even to animals – that exemplified Rivkah's character. Kindness means more than providing what one asks. Kindness means looking and appraising oneself of what someone needs. Thinking of others, regardless of who or what they are, indicates the loftiness of one's character.

Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, related the following vignette concerning Rav Dushnitzer when he was the Menahel Ruchani Ethical Supervisor, of Yeshivas Lomza in Petach Tikvah: A man who was totally secular in his faith and commitment to Judaism walked by the yeshivah on erev Yom Kippur. He noticed that outside of the sheirutim, the room which housed the bathroom facilities, there stood an elderly rav sporting a long, white beard, tearing toilet paper. Why would a man who appeared to be a distinguished person stand outside the lavatory tearing toilet paper on erev Yom Kippur? The man could not contain his incredulity, so, he approached the Mashgiach and asked what and why he was doing this? The Mashgiach, in his quiet, humble manner, replied, "Tomorrow is Yom Kippur, and we will be having many guests joining us for the tefillos. As a result, it is expected that this area will be used and paper will be needed. Thus, I am making sure that the necessary paper is available."

The man who related this incident to Rav Sholom said, "With each rip of the paper, he was ripping my heart! To see such an eminent person care for others on a day when he surely had much more to do for himself, inspired me to begin reflecting on my life and how I had wasted it. Immediately after Yom Kippur, I made an appointment to meet with the mashgiach and asked him to help me while I could still save myself and my future generations." All this happened because a holy man cared about the "little things" that people needed.

We take much for granted – especially those things which we have deemed to fall under the rubric of "little things," "unimportant things."

The following story is a classic demonstration of how far our sensitivity should extend – even to those who are no longer with us. When our sensitivity is flawed, it affects our subconscious to the point that the little flaw will manifest itself later under different conditions. At that point, it will no longer be a little flaw, but a major failing.

The Klausenberger Rebbe, zl, traveled with a group of his chassidim to the kever, grave, of the holy Tanna, Rabbi Yehudah Bar Ilai, which is located in Ein Zeisim, northern Eretz Yisrael. Chazal refer to him usually as Rabbi Yehudah. He was known not only for his extraordinary erudition, but also for his strict and meticulous adherence to Halachah. While visiting the kever, the Rebbe and his entourage davened Minchah at the same time/zman when Klausenberger chassidim usually daven. (The zman to which they adhere is

somewhat later than what is the accepted norm.

The time for Minchah recital is connected with plag Minchah, one and a quarter hours, sha'os zemanios, halachic hours, which are based on the length of the day, sunrise to sunset, divided by twelve. The chassidim davened at a relatively late time, in accordance with the Klausenberg custom.) When they concluded Minchah, the Rebbe and his chassidim returned to their cars. Suddenly, the Rebbe began to shake and was visibly upset. He refused to eat and gave no reason. The Rebbe was no longer a strong, young man – his body having suffered terrible privation during the Holocaust years. The chassidim attempted futilely to convince him to eat something. He refused and remained silent. Something was clearly wrong.

When they arrived where they were staying for the night, the Rebbe separated from his chassidim. In the late morning, after that had completed Tefillas Shacharis, the Rebbe continued fasting. During the early afternoon, the Rebbe announced that he wanted to return to Rabbi Yehudah's kever to daven an early Minchah. They did so, and after Minchah, the Rebbe finally broke his fast and returned to his calm, affable manner. The chassidim asked the Rebbe for an explanation. This was not the Rebbe's usual demeanor. Something had occurred which spurred his sudden, tense reaction, followed by fasting. The Rebbe explained that he was upset with himself for acting insensitively toward the neshamah, soul, of Rabbi Yehudah. "We davened Minchah at Rabbi Yehudah's kever in accordance with the plag Minchah z'man which we keep. However, Rabbi Yehudah clearly states in the Mishnah that the z'man of plag Minchah is earlier. [Rabbi Yehudah was of the opinion that Minchah may be recited from half an hour after chatzos, midday, until one and one quarter hours before shkiyah, sunset. His counterparts held that Minchah may be recited until shkiyah.] Imagine, how his holy neshamah must have felt when we davened Minchah by his kever after the z'man. Thus, we had to return to his kever so that we could daven Minchah earlier – at a time that coincided with Rabbi Yehudah's halachic opinion."

It requires a truly great person to be sensitive to those things which the average person might view as small or insignificant.

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Parsha Potpourri

Parshas Chayei Sorah – Vol. 17, Issue 5

Compiled by **Rabbi Ozer Alport**

(אך אם אתה לו שמעני נתתי כסף השווה לך מני ואකברה את מהי שמה)

After Avrohom eulogizes Sorah and mourns her loss, he proceeds to obtain a burial plot for her.

The Mishnah (Kiddushin 2a) teaches that one of the three methods by which a woman can be betrothed is giving her money. The Gemora derives this from the shared use of the word **קְחָה** – acquire – in the Torah's discussion of marriage and in Avrohom's purchase of the burial plot.

Just as the phrase **קְחָה מִנִּי** – take the money from me – that Avrohom said to Ephron refers to acquiring an item through the transfer of money, so too the mitzvah of marriage, which is described as (Devorim 24:1) – **כִּי יְקַח אִישׁ אִשָּׁה** – when a man takes a woman – can also be effected by giving money to the woman. Why does the Torah specifically use the narrative of Avrohom's efforts to acquire a burial plot for Sorah to teach us a law governing marriage, and what lesson is it intended to teach us?

Rabbi Chaim Zvi Senter beautifully suggests that this was done intentionally in order to teach us the proper outlook on marriage, and on relationships in general. Even though Sorah was no longer alive and was incapable of ever giving him Avrohom any additional benefits or pleasure, he was still willing to spend an exorbitant amount of money in order to secure an appropriate final resting place for his beloved wife. Avrohom's willingness to do so demonstrates that his relationship with Sorah was not motivated by the pursuit of his own pleasure and happiness, but rather on how he could give to his wife and help her.

In deriving one of the laws defining the conception of a marriage from this

episode, the Torah is teaching us the proper outlook on marriage, namely that the very essence of the relationship is intended to be one that is focused on giving to and sharing with one's spouse, rather than a selfish focus on fulfilling one's own desires. Entering into marriage, or any other relationship, with this Torah perspective is a proven recipe for improving our middos and enriching our bonds with others.

ואלה שני חיי ישמעאל מאת שנה ושלשים שנה ושבע שנים ויגוע וימת ויאסף אל עמי (25:17))

Parshas Chayei Sorah concludes by recording that Yishmael died at the age of 137. Since the Torah only relates information that is relevant to us in every generation, why was it necessary for us to know the age at which Yishmael died? Rashi explains that this information is useful not for its own sake, but because it indirectly enables us to calculate "the years of Yaakov's life."

By knowing how long Yishmael lived, we can determine that there are 14 years of Yaakov's life that are unaccounted for, during which time he was studying in the yeshiva of Ever. This is based on the fact that Yishmael died at the time that Yaakov left his parents' house to travel to the house of Lavan (Rashi 28:9). Since Yitzchok was 60 when Yaakov was born and Yishmael was 14 years older than Yitzchok, Yishmael was 74 at the time of Yaakov's birth. If Yishmael died at the age 137, Yaakov must have been 63 when he left his parents' home.

Yaakov worked for Lavan for 14 years prior to the birth of Yosef. Yosef became viceroy in Egypt at the age of 30, after which Yaakov waited an additional nine years before descending to Egypt, at which point he told Pharaoh that he was 130. Working backward, this means that Yaakov was 77 when he arrived at Lavan's house, yet he was only 63 when he left his parents' home. How do we account for the unexplained 14 years? Although Yaakov left his parents' house when he was 63, he first spent 14 years studying in the yeshiva of Ever before traveling to Lavan.

Although this calculation is fascinating and enables us to account for all the events in Yaakov's life, Rav Moshe Shmuel Shapiro questions Rashi's terminology. Why does Rashi say that the information about Yishmael's lifespan may be used to determine "the years of Yaakov's life?" In reality, we already know Yaakov's lifespan and the other events that occurred throughout his life. The only information that we derive from the knowledge that Yishmael died at 137 is that Yaakov spent 14 years studying in the yeshiva of Ever. Wouldn't it have been more accurate for Rashi to write that this information allows us to compute "the years in which Yaakov studied with Ever?"

Rav Shapiro explains that through his subtle choice of words, Rashi is teaching us that the true years of a person's life are the ones in which he is studying Torah, so by enabling us to determine that Yaakov spent 14 years studying in the yeshiva of Ever, the Torah is in fact helping us to reckon "the years of Yaakov's life."

Similarly, the Torah records (24:1) that Avrohom grew old and was – literally, coming with his days. This expression is peculiar; how is it possible to be coming with one's days? The Shelah HaKadosh explains that each day, a person is given a gift of 86,400 seconds to live that day. Any moment that he uses to study Torah or do a mitzvah is deposited in his celestial bank account, and any time that he does not use productively unfortunately goes to waste.

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date: Oct 27, 2021, 10:54 AM

subject: Rabbi Zweig on the Parsha - The Strength Of The Son

Kalman Moshe ben Reuven Avigdor, Rabbi Kalman Packouz.

"May his Neshama have an Aliya!"

A Universal Loss

Sarah died in Kiryat Arbah, which is in Chevron in the land of Canaan. Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to weep for her (23:2).

This week's parsha opens with the death of our matriarch Sarah and the details surrounding her burial. The Torah recounts that Avraham came to eulogize and weep for her. The word "weep" is written with a small letter "ז" ("kaf") and Chazal tell us that this hints to the fact that Avraham curtailed his crying (see Bal Haturim ad loc). Why did Avraham lessen his crying?

Furthermore, the commentaries (see Riva, Ohr Hachaim, Klei Yakar, and others on this verse) are troubled with three other issues in the construct of the possuk: 1) The beginning of the verse informs us that Sarah died and yet the Torah, which budgets its words and letters so carefully, repeats her name again at the end of the possuk. Why? 2) Why does the Torah place her name in between Avraham eulogizing for her and his crying? 3) Finally, doesn't crying usually come before the eulogizing? In other words, why didn't the Torah simply write, "Avraham came to weep and eulogize her"?

The name Sarah has its root in the Hebrew word "sar," meaning "prince." Initially, her name was Sarai, but Hashem changed her name to Sarah when she was ninety. The Talmud (Brachos 13a) explains why Hashem changed her name from Sarai to Sarah; "originally, she was a princess only to her own nation (i.e. Aram), and in the end she became a princess for the entire world." Clearly, Sarah had gone from being a locally respected personality to one whose impact was felt the world over.

This public persona was what Avraham was coming to eulogize. Sarah wasn't merely his wife, she was an important person in her own right. Sarah's death left a void in the world. This is why the Torah repeats her name again; Avraham wasn't coming to eulogize his wife, he was coming to articulate a communal loss. He was explaining who "Sarah" was and what she meant to the world. He wanted people to understand what they had lost.

There is an important lesson in this story. Funerals are a meaningful time to reflect on the value of the deceased's life accomplishments. Yet often eulogies mostly reflect personal memories of the deceased (e.g. Bubby's "amazing" cookie recipe). This causes those in attendance to be saddened not by the loss of the deceased, but rather by the grief and loss of the bereaved. Eulogies should ideally extoll virtues of the deceased, thereby making the loss relevant to all.

This is the lesson that the Torah is conveying about what Avraham was trying to accomplish. His personal loss wasn't the focus at this time and therefore he lessened his own weeping. There is always time for personal grieving, but Avraham's goal at that moment was to explain to those in attendance what they had lost by the death of a princess of the world.

Efron Memorial Gardens?

And Efron's field that was in Machpeilah, which was opposite Mamre, the field and the cave contained therein and all the trees in the boundary around it, was acquired by Avraham as a purchase... (23:17-18)

Avraham Avinu goes to great lengths to acquire a suitable property to bury his deceased wife Sarah. The Torah gives us an unusually detailed account of the negotiation between Avraham and Efron who was the owner of the cave that Avraham wished to buy.

Initially, Efron offers to give it to Avraham for free. In fact, Efron goes a step further; he offers not only the cave but the entire field surrounding the cave as well. Avraham graciously appreciates his offer, but insists on paying for the land. Efron then changes gears and asks for an exorbitant sum (see Ramban ad loc) because he understood that Avraham had his heart set on this piece of property. What made Efron suddenly change from being a benevolent individual to a shrewd businessman?

Additionally, when Avraham dies thirty-eight years later, the Torah makes a remarkable statement: "His sons Yitzchak and Yishmael buried him in the cave of Machpeilah, in the field of Efron" (25:9). In other words, thirty-eight years later the field was still known as once belonging to Efron. Stranger still, 170 years later, when Yaakov Avinu is buried in the cave of Machpeilah by his sons, the Torah once again refers to it as the field that Avraham bought from Efron. What is special about Efron's role here that entitles him to continuously be associated with the cave and its surrounding field?

Sarah's passing wasn't just a loss to Avraham and his nuclear family; it was a communal and national loss (see previous article, "A Universal Loss"). Efron, the consummate businessman, recognized this and had a brilliant insight. He realized that her death was a loss felt by many and therefore her burial site would be significant forevermore. He convinces Avraham Avinu that merely acquiring the Machpeilah cave wouldn't be sufficient to properly pay homage to Sarah. He insists that Avraham needs the entire surrounding area to create a memorial park in her memory.*

Efron genuinely offers to give the entire area to Avraham as a memorial park. Why? Efron wants the honor of donating the land and being eternally remembered in this way, i.e. Sarah being buried in "Efron's Memorial Gardens." But Avraham insists on buying the land because he wants to have her buried in "his" land – i.e. Eretz Yisroel. Once Efron feels that this is solely a business transaction and that Sarah wasn't going

to be buried in "Efron's Memorial Gardens," he charges Avraham an exorbitant sum (see accompanying Did You Know column) to remove his name from the deed.

However, Efron still gets credit for the idea of creating a historical site where many people can come and visit forevermore, which is why his name continues to be associated with the transaction throughout the Torah.

*We find the same sentiment regarding the burial site of Lady Diana, a woman who was an internationally beloved icon.

Did You Know...

In this week's parsha, Avraham purchases the Machpeilah Cave (the "double" cave). He bought the cave from Efron the Hittite for 400 silver shekel so that he could bury Sarah in a proper and respectful manner. Adam, Chava, the patriarchs, and matriarchs (aside from Rochel) were also buried in Machpeilah, as well as Eisav's head (Sotah 13a). Here are a few facts we thought you might find of interest regarding the Machpeilah Cave:

1. Adam found this place after he and Chava were kicked out of Gan Eden. After searching in vain for a way back into Gan Eden, they came across this cave. It smelled just like Gan Eden, but when they tried digging further, a heavenly voice told them to stop. Adam therefore chose this place to bury Chava, and their son Shes buried Adam there (Zohar Chadash, quoted by Me'em Lo'ez Chayeit Sarah 1).

2. According to the Midrash (Pirkei d'Rebbi Eliezer 36), Avraham approached the Jebusites (Hittites) and requested to purchase the cave from them. They answered Avraham, "We know that your future offspring will try to conquer our home city (Jerusalem). If you agree to prevent them from taking Jerusalem without our permission, we will sell you the cave." Avraham agreed and signed a contract, which was hung on statues outside the gates of Jerusalem. There are commentators who hold that Joshua did not conquer Jerusalem when he entered Israel due to Avraham's agreement (seen in Judges 1:21). Centuries later, King David purchased the Temple Mount from the Jebusites.

3. Currently, this double cave is located beneath a Saladin-era mosque, which had been converted from a large rectangular Herodian-era Judean structure. Dating back over 2,000 years, the monumental Herodian compound is believed to be the oldest continuously used, and intact, prayer structure in the world, which makes it the oldest major building in the world that is still used and also fulfills its original function.

4. While we know that Avraham paid 400 silver shekel for the cave of Machpeilah, what would that equate to in today's dollars? Here is our attempt to figure it out: Rashi (Bava Metzia 87a) explains that these were not normal shekalim, they were equivalent to 2,500 biblical shekalim. The Me'em Lo'ez elaborates on this and states it was 46,875 oz. of silver, or \$803,437 at today's prices. However, silver was significantly more rare back then (81% of all mined silver was mined only since the 1900's according to the US Bureau of mines in "1930 Summarized Silver Production Data"). We also know from transactions recorded that a sheep in the times of ancient Babylon was only roughly 10 g, or about \$5 by today's cost of silver (Commodities investing: "The Historical Value Of Silver"). Compare that to the average cost of a sheep nowadays of \$200, we find a ratio of 1:40 of the value of silver in those days. If our estimates are correct, we then multiply \$803,437 by 40, which equals \$32,137,480 in today's currency. That's a lot of shekels.

Parshat Chayyei Sarah: A Place to Lie... Or a Place to Live

by Rabbi Eitan Mayer

PARASHAT HAYYEI SARA:

The names of most parshiot usually tell us very little about the content of the parasha. This week's parasha raises this tendency to new heights: not only is the parasha not about the "Life of Sara," it is in fact all about the death, burial, and replacement of Sara (in several different ways).

The parasha tells at great length of the search for a mate for Yitzchak, in fact telling the story twice, once from the perspective of the omniscient narrator and once in the words of Avraham's servant as he describes his adventures to Rivka's family. However, since this part of the parsha usually gets lots of play in divrei Torah and parasha analyses, and I am a parasha-contrarian, we will be taking a close look at a different, more neglected story in the parasha: the story of Avraham's acquisition of a grave for Sara -- the Cave of Mahpela in Hevron.

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. The story of the purchase is told in excruciating detail. Read through the text slowly and carefully, unpacking every line. Imagine you are Avraham, telling your family or a few friends over the dinner table this story of a real estate purchase, and you'll see what I mean. Why is there so much detail? What is the message? And why is the whole story important enough to appear in the Torah?
2. The two parties to the conversation -- Avraham and the Hittites -- seem to be having trouble communicating, as each one repeatedly claims that the other side is not really listening. Why won't either side accept the kind generosity of the other side? Why are both sides trying to out-nice each other?
3. What other features of this section strike you as strange, and how do you account for them?

PARASHAT HAYYEI SARA:

This week's parasha begins with the death of Sara. It is characteristic of Jewish tradition to turn death into life, to call this parasha "The Life of Sara" rather than "The Death of Sara." Jewish tradition often refers to sad or evil things by their opposites:

- 1) When the Talmud and Midrash talk about sinful Jews, they often use the term, "The ENEMIES of Israel." We don't ever want to refer explicitly to our own people as sinful.
- 2) When the Talmud discusses the laws of one who curses God, the Gemara refers to the act of cursing God by its opposite: instead of calling it "cursing God," the Gemara refers to this evil act as "BLESSING God." Cursing God is something so terrible that we don't even want to refer to it as such, so we call it by its opposite.
- 3) When the Talmud refers to someone who is blind, it often uses the term, "One who has plenty of light." Of course, a blind person has no "light" at all, but instead of accenting the disability, the Gemara expresses the same thing by its opposite.

BURYING THE BODY:

Sara has died; Avraham, seeking a grave in which to bury her, negotiates with the Bnei Het (Hittites) for a site. As you read the section, note the tremendous emphasis on the auditory -- hearing and listening:

BERESHIT 23:2-20 --

Sara died in Kiryat Arba, which is Hevron, in the Land of Cana'an. Avraham came to mourn for Sara and cry over her.

Avraham rose from before his dead and spoke to the children of Het, saying, "I am a stranger and temporary dweller among you; give me a holding of a grave ['ahuzat kever'] among you, and I will bury my dead from before me."

The children of Het answered Avraham, saying to him: "LISTEN TO US, master: you are a prince of God among us! Bury your dead in the choicest of our graves! Not one of us will withhold his grave from you, for you to bury your dead."

Avraham rose and bowed to the people of the land, the children of Het. He spoke with them, saying, "If you really wish to [assist me in] bury[ing] my dead from before me, LISTEN TO ME, and let me meet with Efron, son of Tzohar; let him give to me the Cave of Mahpela which is his, which is at the end of his field; let him give it to me for full payment among you, as a holding of a grave ['ahuzat kever']."

Efron lived among the children of Het. Efron the Hiti answered Avraham IN THE HEARING of the children of Het, before all of the people in the gate of the city, saying, "No, master, LISTEN TO ME -- the field, I have given it to you, and the cave in it, to you I have given it! In the sight of the children of my nation I have given it to you; bury your dead!"

Avraham bowed to the people of the land. He spoke to Efron IN THE HEARING of the people of the land, saying, "But if

you would only LISTEN TO ME, I have given the payment for the field -- take it from me, and I will bury my dead there."

Efron answered Avraham, saying to him, "Master, LISTEN TO ME -- what is a land of four hundred shekels of silver between me and you? Bury your dead!"

Avraham LISTENED to Efron, and Avraham weighed for Efron the money he had spoken of IN THE HEARING of the children of Het -- four hundred shekels of silver, acceptable to a merchant. The field of Efron, which was in Mahpela, before Mamre -- the field, and the cave in it, and all the trees of the field, in all its perimeter around -- arose to Avraham as a purchase, in sight of the children of Het, with all the people in the gate of the city. After this, Avraham buried Sara, his wife, in the cave of the field of Mahpela, before Mamre, which is Hevron, in the Land of Cana'an. The field and the cave in it arose to Avraham as a holding of a grave ['ahuzat kaver'], from the children of Het.

As usual, a significant word or phrase should jump out at us: "LISTEN TO ME" ["shema'eini"]. Except for the first time Avraham speaks, this word appears in *every* other instance in which someone speaks: pesukim (verses) 6, 8, 11, 12, 15, and 16. The Bnei Het say, "If you would only listen to us . . ."; Avraham responds by arguing his position and saying, "If you would only listen to me . . .", and so on.

When people are not just arguing, but keep insisting "If you would only listen to me!", it is clear that the parties are firm in their positions and unwilling to give in. "If you would only listen to me" means "Your proposal is unacceptable." If it's true that the two sides really are firm in their positions, what are their positions? What is the disagreement about in these negotiations? From a simple reading of the text, it appears that there is no disagreement at all! Avraham wants a place to bury Sara, and the Bnei Het generously offer him a place! Perhaps there is some disagreement over the money: Avraham wants to pay for a grave, while the Bnei Het want to give him one for free. But this only begs the question: why indeed does Avraham insist on paying for the grave? For now, let us hold this question.

THE SWEETNESS OF THE BNEI HET:

The next point of disagreement is less obvious than the disagreement about the money: Avraham apparently wants one type of grave, but the Bnei Het subtly refuse and offer only a different type of grave: Avraham repeatedly requests an "AHUZAT kever," "a HOLDING of a grave," while the Bnei Het offer only a "kever." Avraham, it seems, wants his *own* burial ground, a permanent possession -- a "*holding* of a grave," an "ahuza" -- but the Bnei Het instead offer him only a *space* within one of their own burial grounds: "Bury your dead in the choicest of *our* graves." Their generous offer of a space within their own burial grounds is actually a refusal of Avraham's request to acquire his own private burial ground. Avraham responds by insisting on an "ahuzat kaver"; he is not interested in a space in one of the Hittite gravesites.

This leads us to the next disagreement: what does Avraham say he wants to buy from Efron, and what does Efron want to give him? In pasuk 9, Avraham states clearly that he wants the cave at the edge of the field. But in pasuk 11, Efron says he will give him the cave *and* the field! In pasuk 13, Avraham 'gives in' on this point and agrees to take the cave along with the field. And in pasuk 16, Avraham seems to capitulate again: the "If you would only listen to me!" pattern ends with an apparent victory by Efron, as instead of another "Would you listen to me!", we hear that "Avraham listened to Efron." In this great struggle to be "heard," Avraham has apparently accepted Efron's terms -- Efron has been "heard," Avraham has capitulated.

To summarize, 3 different issues seem to divide Avraham and the Bnei Het:

- 1) Whether Avraham will acquire a gravesite through sale or as a gift.
- 2) Whether Avraham will receive an independent, permanent family burial place (an "ahuza"), or only a place within one of the gravesites of the Bnei Het.
- 3) Whether Avraham will receive the cave only (as he proposes), or the cave and the field next to it (as Efron proposes).

WHY BOTHER?

What is Avraham really after? Why is it so important to him to get a private gravesite for Sara? Why doesn't he accept the generosity of the Bnei Het when they offer him a grave for Sara among their best graves? And why does he so stubbornly insist on paying for the grave? Why not accept a free grave?

Let's look at one more interesting feature of the text. One way in which the Torah clues us in to subtleties is the way it refers to different people. With whom is Avraham negotiating? The Torah refers to Avraham's interlocutors using three different names:

- 1) "Bnei Het": Pasuk 3 refers to them as the "Bnei Het," the "Children of Het": this is who they are in the simple sense, and this is how they are referred to throughout this section.
- 2) "Am Ha-Aretz": Pesukim 7, 12, and 13 refer to Avraham's interlocutors as the "am ha-aretz," the "people of the land." Notice that this phrase is *always* used just before Avraham speaks, not when *they* themselves speak! This hints to us that the reason they are called "am ha-aretz" is because Avraham in particular relates to them as the "people of the land"; he sees them as the "am ha-aretz" because that's exactly what he wants from them -- land!

3) "Those within the gates of the city": Pesukim 10 and 18 refer to the crowd of Hittite observers as "all those within the gate of the city" [i.e., everyone in town]. This description of the Bnei Het emphasizes that the whole deal takes place publicly, in front of the entire crowd of Bnei Het who live in Hevron. We will soon see why this is important.

CLOSING THE DEAL:

Now let's look at the end of the sale. What is the order of events?

- 1) Avraham pays the money.
- 2) The field, cave, and trees (!) become his.
- 3) Avraham buries Sara.
- 4) The Torah tells us again that the field and the cave become Avraham's.

The Torah tells us twice that field and the cave become Avraham's. But this is not exactly a repetition: the first time the Torah tells us about Avraham's acquisition, it refers to the field and cave as a "mikna," a purchase; the second time, after Avraham has buried his wife there, the Torah calls the field and cave an "ahuza," a permanent holding. Apparently, the field and cave become Avraham's "purchase" as soon as he pays the money, but they become an "ahuza," a permanent holding, only once he has buried Sara. In other words, he has taken possession of the field in two different ways: 1) first by buying it with money and 2) then by actually establishing physical occupancy of the land by burying Sara there.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER:

Let us now take the evidence and put it together:

* We know that Avraham wants an "ahuzat kaver," a permanent burial ground, not just a space in someone else's burial ground.

* We know that he wants to pay for it and will not accept it as a gift.

* We know he views the Bnei Het as the "am ha-aretz," "the people of the land," from whom he wants land.

* We know that the Torah stresses that this event takes place publicly and is witnessed by everyone present.

* We know that Avraham performs two different "kinyanim" (acquisition procedures), by both paying for the property and also occupying it. Each of these procedures yields a different status of ownership -- one of title, one of occupancy.

What does all this add up to? What is Avraham really after in these negotiations?

Avraham wants a piece of Eretz Yisrael, an "ahuza," a permanent piece of land which he will pass down to his descendants.

We saw in Parashat Lekh Lekha that Avraham misunderstands Hashem's promise that he will inherit the land: Avraham understands that he himself will take possession of the land, and therefore questions Hashem's promise when time passes and the land has not become his. But Hashem tells him that he has misunderstood: Avraham himself will not take ownership of the land -- his descendants will, and only after they have emerged from enslavement in Egypt (and only once the current inhabitants of the land have descended to a state of evil which justifies their destruction.) This is part of the message of the "berit bein ha-betarim," the "covenant between the split pieces." Avraham understands this and accepts it -- but he still desperately wants a foothold of his own in Eretz Yisrael.

Avraham knows that the people of the land -- the "am ha-aretz" -- will never sell land to him if he simply visits the local Century 21 real estate office to ask about a homestead. He is an outsider, a foreigner. For the Bnei Het to sell land to him would be to admit him into their society as an equal with permanent membership. Avraham is, so to speak, the first black person to try to move into an upper-class, all-white suburban community. That first black man knows no one will sell him a house if he makes his approach directly, so he approaches indirectly: perhaps he hires a white man to go and buy it for him, and then he moves in with his family.

Avraham's strategy is to take advantage of the immediate need for a grave for Sara to grab a permanent foothold in Eretz Yisrael. Avraham lowers himself and behaves humbly, positioning himself as the bereaved husband who needs a favor from powerful neighbors. Paradoxically, Avraham's is a position of power: the Torah stresses that the entire scene takes place in public, with everyone watching. Most people are capable of refusing to give charity to a poor person who approaches them privately, but to refuse a poor person who comes to you and begs you in front of everyone is just plain embarrassing. Avraham milks his situation for all it's worth, positioning himself as the powerless one, the rootless stranger who depends upon the kindness of the honorable inhabitants of the land. Every single time he speaks, Avraham mentions that he needs a gravesite in order to bury his wife (in pesukim 4, 8, and 13), driving home the image of a grieving mourner to prevent the Bnei Het from deflecting him as an ambitious member of a minority group eager to move into the neighborhood. He introduces himself (pasuk 4) as a wanderer and a stranger, a person with no status among the natives of the land. He is a "charity case." He repeatedly bows to the Bnei Het, manipulating the Bnei Het into capitulating by making a show of submission.

The Bnei Het, experienced negotiators, immediately see Avraham's show of humility for what it is -- a threat. The more charity-worthy Avraham appears, the more inappropriate it would be to turn away his request in public. They try to reduce

some of his power as a charity case by insisting that he is no rootless, statusless wanderer, he is a "prince of God"! Superficially, the Bnei Het are comforting Avraham, showing respect for him; in truth, they attempt only to undercut his negotiating position. Whenever they address him, they call him "adoni," "master," attempting to dislodge Avraham from the position of least stature -- and therefore greatest power -- in this negotiation. A "prince of God" needs favors from no one.

We can now look again at these negotiations and read them in a new light:

Avraham first positions himself as the underdog, which gives him power. Next, he asks for an "ahuzat kaver," a permanent grave-possession. The Bnei Het first try to challenge Avraham's powerful underdog status by insisting that they consider him a "prince of God." But they know they cannot turn him down flat on his request of a grave for his wife, so instead they become super-generous. They insist that they cannot let someone as important as Avraham pay for a grave. Instead, they offer him a free spot in one of their own family gravesites: "Bury your dead in the choicest of our graves! Not one of us will withhold his grave from you, for you to bury your dead." This is a compromise for them; they will have to let the "black man" into the neighborhood in some small way, but on the other hand, they much prefer to let him bury his wife in one of their family graves than to sell him a family cemetery of his own, which would give him a permanent connection to the land (and the status which comes with being a landowner).

Indeed, the Bnei Het stress the *action* of burial ("kevor meitekha") over the owning of a grave; they want to help Avraham bury his wife, not purchase a place to do so. They respond to Avraham's first request for an ahuzat kever by cleverly demurring: "*Bury* *your* *dead* in the choicest of our graves; not one of us will withhold his grave from you, for you to *bury* *your* *dead*." Well, we all know a grave is for burying the dead, so when the Bnei Het offer Avraham a grave specifically "to bury your dead," what they mean is that if he wants a grave in order to bury his wife, they will help him, but if he wants it for some other reason -- which he does indeed -- they will not deal with him.

Avraham acknowledges the "generosity" of the Bnei Het in pasuk 7 with a bow. But then he pursues a new strategy. The Bnei Het have outsmarted him by appearing to generously offer him one of their own graves; to simply refuse this offer and insist on his own gravesite would appear ungrateful and impolite. So he puts Plan B into action. He will single out an individual among the Bnei Het and embarrass him into selling him a grave.

Clearly, Avraham has done his homework: he has planned for this possibility. He already knows that there is a cave of Mahpela which will serve nicely as a gravesite. He also knows who owns it. He repeats that he wants to pay instead of accepting a gravesite as a gift. When you accept a gift, you are a powerless recipient -- you cannot control what is given to you, only choose to accept or not. If Avraham had agreed to accept a gift, when they offered him a free grave among their own graves, to refuse this gift would have seemed ungrateful. So he continues to insist that he wants to pay for it. Also, he wants to establish very clear ownership of this land, as we will see, and a sale is always more powerful than a gift.

Efron, the Hittite singled out by Avraham in Plan B, is a clever negotiator. He offers not just the *cave* which Avraham had requested ("... Let me meet with Efron, son of Tzohar; let him give to me the *Cave* of Mahpela which is his, which is at the end of his field"), but also the *field* next to it ("... The *field,* I have given it to you, and the cave in it, to you I have given it!"). Efron is trying to get Avraham to back down from the deal by insisting that the deal will include not only the cave, but also the field.

Efron's tactic recalls a tactic of Boaz in the Book of Ruth: the fields of Naomi need to be redeemed, so Boaz, the local judge/leader, offers the opportunity to redeem the fields to an unnamed relative of hers -- "Ploni Almoni." "Ploni" is quite ready to redeem the fields until Boaz adds that by redeeming the fields, he is also taking Ruth, Naomi's Moabite daughter-in-law, as a wife! "Ploni," unwilling to marry a foreign woman and besmirch his lilly-white pedigree, gets cold feet in a hurry and backs down, clearing the way for Boaz himself to redeem the fields and marry Ruth. Even though Efron continues to call the offer a gift, he knows Avraham will not accept it a gift. He throws in the field hoping that Avraham will decide that it's too expensive to buy both the field and the cave.

Avraham calls Efron's bluff and accepts the deal: "I have given the payment for the *field.*" Efron responds by carrying on with the myth that it is all a gift -- "Master, listen to me, what is a land of *four* *hundred* *shekels* of silver between me and you?" -- but what he is really doing is naming the price of the field and the cave. This is his final effort to dissuade Avraham: making the field and cave so expensive that Avraham will back down.

AVRAHAM FINALLY "LISTENS":

Until now, this negotiation has been filled with people telling each other "Shema'eini" -- "Listen to me!" Each party rejects the other's proposal, asserting his own in its place. But finally, in response to Efron's final dissuasive effort, the Torah tells us, "Va-yishma Avraham," that "Avraham listened." It seems that Avraham has given in; he "listens" to Efron. Here we have a double irony: on the surface, Efron has lost -- he wanted to give the field for free, and Avraham insists on paying and gets his way. The irony is that in truth, Efron has won, because he will be paid a lot of money for the field he said he would give for free. But on the most fundamental level, Efron loses the most important struggle, as Avraham calls his bluff once again and comes up with the money without a second's hesitation. Efron underestimates the importance of Eretz Yisrael to Avraham, and this mistake costs him victory in this polite struggle.

A PLACE TO ** LIVE **:

The Torah goes on to tell us that "the cave, the field, and all the trees in it" become Avraham's. If this whole story were really about buying a grave, it would make no sense to mention the trees, and even the field would be besides the point.

But if Avraham's real goal was to gain a permanent personal foothold in the land in which his children would live with their God, then we can understand that the *grave* is what is besides the point, but the field, and the living trees in it are completely the point! Indeed, the Torah later confirms that Avraham and Yitzhak do live in Hevron:

BERESHIT 35:27 --

Ya'akov came to Yitzhak, his father, to Mamre, Kiryat Arba, which is Hevron, where Avraham and Yitzchak [had] lived.

Eretz Yisrael is important to Avraham as a place to live, not a place to be taken in a pine box in the cargo bay of an El-Al 747 once he is dead and needs a place to be buried. He sees Eretz Yisrael as a place to live, not a place to be dead. And he wants a piece of it.

The Torah then tells us that he buries Sara in the cave. And then it tells us again that the field and the cave become his, as burying Sara is another form of acquisition of the land. Now Avraham is not just the owner in a legal sense, he has also occupied the land, permanently, through the grave he has established there.

These are the two senses in which we are connected to Eretz Yisrael -- in the living, active, making-Aliyah-raising-children-there sense, and, when we cannot hold onto the land for one reason or another, then it remains our "ahuzat kaver" -- the place where the dead of so many of our generations are buried. In a fundamental (and quite literal) sense, we always occupy the land. We always return to it to bury the next generation, or, when Hashem smiles at us, to return to establish a state, to live in its fields with its trees, and not just in its burial caves.

BERESHIT 25:8-10 --

Avraham expired and died at a good old age, old and satisfied, and was gathered to his people. Yitzhak and Yishmael, his sons, buried him in the cave of Mahpela, in the **FIELD** of Efron, son of Tzohar the Hiti, which is before Mamre. [In] the **FIELD** which Avraham bought from the children of Het -- there were buried Avraham and Sara, his wife.

Shabbat Shalom

Parshas Chayei Sarah: The Slave's Mission

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

Pursuant to Sarah's burial, we are told of the mission undertaken by Avraham's slave - to find a wife for Yitzhak:

"Avraham was now old and well advanced in years, and Hashem had blessed him in every way. He said to the chief servant in his household, the one in charge of all that he had: '... I want you to swear by Hashem, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Yitzchak.' The servant asked him, 'What if the woman is unwilling to come back with me to this land? Shall I then take your son back to the country you came from?'. 'Make sure that you do not take my son back there,' Avraham said. '... If the woman is unwilling to come back with you, then you will be released from this oath of mine. Only do not take my son back there.'" (B'resheet 24:1-8).

The mission is clear - find a wife for Yitzhak from among Avraham's extended family who will come back to K'na'an (Eretz Yisra'el) and join the Avrahamic tribe. The one condition which is stressed by Avraham is not to bring Yitzhak back "there".

Upon arriving at the old family home (Aram Naharayim), the slave prays to God for help in completing his mission:

(Parenthetical note: from early Midrashim on, the unnamed slave is identified as "Eliezer"; indeed, in the famous dictum of Rav [BT Hulin 95b], the validity or taboo of divining is modeled after "Yonatan, son of Saul and Eliezer, the slave of Avraham". This identification is, *prima facie*, somewhat difficult. After all, the only time that Eliezer's name is mentioned is as Avraham's chief steward – hardly a slave – and he has already reached that powerful position in Avraham's household about 70 years earlier than this event. The likely reason that the Rabbis "assumed" Eliezer is that it is the only name of a member of Avraham's household that we can reference; there are other examples of this phenomenon in Midrashic literature but that is beyond the scope of this discussion).

"Then he prayed, 'O Hashem, God of my master Avraham, give me success today, and show kindness to my master Avraham. See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. May it be that when I say to a girl, "Please let down your jar that I may have a drink," and she says, "Drink, and I'll water your camels too" - let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master.'"

How does the slave's request of God conform to the stated goals of his mission? Avraham asked him to find a young woman who would come back to K'na'an to marry Yitzhak - and he set up a "hospitality test" for the local girls!

Before addressing this question, I'd like to pose a greater question about Yitzhak - one that is the focus of Midrashic and medieval commentary: From the time that Avraham is told to stay his hand from Yitzhak (B'resheet 22:12) until Rivkah is brought back with the slave as his fiancee, Yitzhak is nowhere to be found. He doesn't return to B'er Sheva with Avraham after the Akedah (ch. 22), nor is he present at his own mother's burial (chapter 23). (There are some who posit that he was present but not active - and therefore not mentioned - at both of these scenes; however, the simple reading of text implies that Yitzhak is not present at all).

The Akedah was undoubtedly the most critical point of Yitzchak's life - one which shaped the essential dimensions of his personality. The Midrash (B'resheet Rabbah 65:6) comments that as Avraham was looking down at his son on the altar, the angels were sobbing in heaven in anticipation of his death. At that time, the heavens opened and their angelic tears fell into the eyes of Yitzhak - leading to his early blindness (see B'resheet 27:1). The implication of this Midrash is that the events which took place on that mountaintop profoundly affected Yitzhak for the rest of his life.

What happened to Yitzhak atop the mountain, bound and lying on top of the altar, that changed him so deeply?

When we look back at God's original directive to Avraham regarding Yitzchak, we find an ambiguous command: *v'Ha'alehu sham l'Olah* (B'resheet 22:2) - which might be translated "take him up there as an Olah" - meaning "offer him up"; or it might be understood as "take him up there for an Olah" - meaning "show him how to perform an offering" (see Rashi and Ralbag). Indeed, according to some opinions, this was the "test" of Avraham - to see how he would respond to an ambiguous message with cataclysmic overtones

THE RESULT OF THE AKEDAH: YITZHAK BECOMES A LIVING OLAH

There is, however, a third way of understanding the phrase in question which may explain Yitzhak's "disappearance" in the subsequent narratives. Unlike the "Hatat", "Asham" (expiation offerings) and "Shlamim" (peace offering), the Olah is totally given over to God. No part of the Olah is eaten by people. Within the matrix of offerings, the Olah represents the dimension of our personalities which longs to be totally bound up with God, unconcerned with (and unfettered by) mundane concerns

Now, let's take a fresh look at the command: Take him up to be an Olah - in other words, do not offer him up (i.e. sacrifice him), but make him an Olah - an offering which is solely dedicated to God. Indeed, Avraham's hand is only stayed with reference to Yitzhak's physical life, but, following the ruling of the Mishnah (Zevahim 9:1), once an offering has been brought up to the altar, it can never lose that sense of sanctity. Yitzhak became, from the moment of his binding, the human, living Olah. His life was no longer one of earthly concerns and interactions - he became an other-worldly man. This may be the implication of his not returning from the mountain - because, in the greater

sense of things, he never "came down". He was no longer a child of Avraham and Sarah, but his own separate, sanctified being. This would explain the text's silence about his participation in Sarah's funeral. This also explains why Yitzhak, unlike Avraham and Yaakov, is not allowed to leave the holy land (see Gen. 26:3 and Rashi ad loc.) - he is, in the words of the Rabbis, an "Olah T'mimah" - a perfect Olah.

Back to our original question: Now that Sarah has died and Avraham turns his concerns to the continuity of the faith community, he appoints his slave to find the appropriate partner for Yitzhak. Avraham knows, from his own experience, that in order to carry on the mission of spreading God's word, it takes another Avraham - someone who knows how to reach out to others, who can interact with this world in a sanctified manner, someone who can keep one foot in the mundane and the other in the holy. This is no longer Yitzhak, as he is a separate being, dedicated to God and separated from this world.

He sends his loyal servant with a mission - to find someone who is willing to leave Aram/Charan, separate from family and move south, to the land of the future and the promise. This so strongly echoes Avraham's own beginnings, that the slave well understands that his master essentially wants another "Avraham" as a daughter-in-law. Avraham even points this out in his response to the slave's voiced concern that he may not be successful: "Hashem, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house, and from the land of my nativity, and who spoke to me, and who swore to me, saying: To your seed will I give this land; He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there." (Beresheet 24:7)

He must find someone who is not only willing to leave home, but someone who exemplifies Avraham's attributes and values. The trait which most typifies Avraham is kindness - and that is most obviously expressed by him in his hospitality. Therefore, the litmus test which any potential fiancee must pass, is the test of hospitality. Will this young woman be capable of carrying on the Avrahamic tradition of "Kiruv", bringing people closer to God's truth through kindness, love and hospitality? Fortunately, the young woman passed with flying colors - and our future was secured.

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PARSHAT CHAYEI SARA
A WIFE FROM 'TOLDOT TERACH'

'Yichus' [family lineage] has always been an important consideration when selecting one's spouse. Nevertheless, Avraham's insistence that his 'chosen' son marry specifically a descendant of his brother **Nachor** requires explanation.

In this week's shiur, we return to our discussion of the 'toldot' in Sefer Breishit in order to answer this question.

INTRODUCTION

As you surely must have noticed, the phrase 'eileh toldot...' appears numerous times in Sefer Breishit. In our shiur on Parshat Noach, we explained how these toldot [genealogies] form the 'backbone' of Sefer Breishit.

In that shiur, we also explained how Sefer Breishit divided into two distinct sections. The first eleven chapters included three units that began with toldot, each unit containing a primary story relating to God's dissatisfaction with mankind's behavior:

Adam's sin in Gan Eden (and Cain's sin) / chapters 2-4,
 The corruption of dor ha-**mabul** / the Flood -chps. 5-9
 The story of Migdal Bavel & their dispersion / chps 10-11.

After that incident - the Torah begins the 'second (and primary) section of Sefer Breishit - introduced by 'toldot Shem' (see 11:10). From this point and onward, the focus of the Sefer shifts to God's choice of Avraham Avinu to become the forefather of His model nation [what we refer to as the 'bechira' process]. Each unit of this section is introduced by toldot as well, be it 'toldot Yishmael' or 'toldot Yitzchak' etc, concluding with the story of Yosef and his brothers - introduced by 'eileh toldot Yaakov' (see 37:2). Sefer Breishit ends, as **all** of Yaakov's offspring are chosen to become Am Yisrael - God's special nation.

Our introduction as noted the rather obvious 'linear' progression of toldot in Sefer Breishit. We begin our shiur by noting the existence of a 'parallel' progression as well, which will highlight the significance of the pasuk that introduces 'toldot Terach'. Afterward, we will show how the nation of Israel stems not only from Avraham Avinu, but from Terach as well. [And we'll try to explain why.]

CHARTING THE TOLDOT

The following chart illustrates the progression of these toldot in Sefer Breishit. The chart lists the names that follow the phrase 'eileh toldot...' and highlights the parallel in their progression in each of the two sections described above. [The '*' star symbol represents the phrase 'eileh toldot'.]

Study this chart carefully.

SEFER BREISHIT - UNITS OF 'EILEH TOLDOT...'

CHAPTERS 1-11

* ADAM (see 5:1)
ten generations to:
 * NOACH (6:9)
3 sons:
Shem, Cham, & Yefet
 |
 * BNEI NOACH (10:1)
 |
 |
70 nations (10:1-32)

CHAPTERS 11-50

* SHEM (see 11:10)
ten generations to:
 * TERACH (11:27)
3 sons:
AVRAHAM, Haran, & Nachor
 | *YISHMAEL (25:12 –rejected)
 * YITZCHAK (26:1)
 | * ESAV (36:1) - rejected
***YAAKOV** (37:1-2)
 |
70 nefesh become God's Nation

As you study this chart, note how the chart divides according to the two sections described above. Note also how the bechira process includes a 'dechiya' [rejection] stage together with each bechira stage. Finally, note how each section concludes with seventy! [Additional parallels will be noted as we continue.]

'TEN GENERATIONS' - TWICE!

As the chart shows, each 'section' begins with a detailed listing of 'ten generations'

Section One: - 5:1-32 / from Adam to Noach)

Section Two - 11:10-26 / from Shem to Terach

[Technically speaking one may be 9 generations, but it's the overall pattern that is very similar. Note also how the mishna in Pirkei Avot 5:2-3 relates to this structure.]

This opening 'structural' parallel supports the thematic parallel between these two sections, which we discussed in our shiur on Parshat Breishit. In that shiur, we explained how the second section of Sefer Breishit begins with 'toldot Shem', and hence the story of Avraham's bechira. As God's choice of his offspring was for the purpose of lead mankind in the direction of God - it was significant that this section began with the '**shem**', whose name reflects man's purpose - to call out 'be-**shem Hashem**'.

Strikingly, this structural parallel extends beyond the similarity of these two 'ten-generation' units. Note from the above chart how the middle and conclusion of each list bear a remarkable resemblance as well: Most obvious is how we find the number 70 at the conclusion of each unit. But more intriguing is the parallel that emerges in the middle!

Note how:

*Toldot **Adam** concludes with **Noach**,
 after which we find **toldot Noach**,
 & the story of his 3 sons **Shem, Cham, & Yefet**.
 (See 5:28-32; 6:9)

* **Toldot Shem** concludes with **Terach**,
 after which we find **toldot Terach**,
 & the story of his 3 sons **Avram, Nachor, & Haran**.
 (See 11:24-26; 11:27)

Furthermore, the three sons of Noach, like the three sons of Terach receive either a special blessing or curse:

* Avraham, like Shem, is blessed with the privilege of representing God.

* Haran's son Lot, like Cham's son Canaan, is involved in a sin relating to incest.

* Nachor's offspring Rivka, Rachel & Leah return to 'dwell within the tent' of the children of Avraham, just as Yefet is destined to dwell within the 'tent of **Shem**'. [See 9:24-27 / 'yaft Elokim le-Yefet ve-yishkon be-ohalei Shem'.]

Even though the meaning of these parallels requires further elaboration, for our purposes here - the parallel itself calls our attention to the significance of 'toldot Terach'.

TOLDOT TERACH vs. TOLDOT AVRAHAM

In fact, the phrase 'toldot Terach' appears right where we may have expected to find a unit beginning with 'toldot Avraham'! To our surprise, even though we later find units that begin with 'toldot Yitzchak' and 'toldot Yaakov' [and even 'toldot Yishmael' & 'toldot Esav'], we never find a unit that begins with 'toldot Avraham'!

Instead, at the precise spot where we would expect to find a unit beginning with 'toldot Avraham', we find a unit that begins with 'toldot Terach'. This alone already hints to the fact that there must be something special about Terach.

This observation also explains why Sefer Breishit dedicates so much detail to the story of Lot. Since the phrase "toldot Terach" forms the header for parshiot Lech Lecha, Vayera and Chayei Sara, this unit must include not only the story of Avraham, but the story of the children of Nachor and Haran (Lot), as well.

Thus, in addition to the life story of Avraham himself, these 'parshiot' also discuss:

- Lot's decision to leave Avraham Avinu, preferring the 'good life' in Sdom (13:1-18)
- Avraham's rescue of Lot from the four kings (14:1-24)
- God's sparing of Lot from destruction of Sdom (19:1-24)
- The birth of Lot's two sons - Ammon & Moav (19:30-38)
- The 12 children of Nachor (22:20-24) [8 sons from his wife and 4 from his pilegesh. (Sounds familiar?)]
- Avraham's marrying off his son to Nachor's granddaughter

Hence, Parshat Chayei Sarah forms a most appropriate conclusion for this unit that began with 'toldot Terach'. Avraham makes a point of selecting a daughter-in-law specifically from the family of his brother, Nachor, thus bringing the history of 'toldot Terach' full circle. As we will show in our shiur, all of Terach's offspring may have potential for bechira. Therefore, if Yitzchak is to be married, his wife should be chosen from the family in which this potential lies.

[This may also explain why Nachor and Avraham themselves married 'within the family' - the daughters of Haran (see 11:29 and Rashi's identification of Yiska as Sara).]

WHY TERACH?

What was so special about Terach that he 'deserves' his own toldot? It is really hard to know since the Torah tells us so little about him.

On the one hand, Sefer Yehoshua introduces Nachor as almost a paradigm for the life of an idolater (see Yehoshua 24:2). Yet, as the end of Parshat Noach teaches us, Terach was the first person to recognize the spiritual importance of Eretz Canaan. He set out to 'make aliyah' even **before** God had commanded Avraham to do so (see 11:31 & Seforno's explanation).

Even though this may sound a bit too 'zionistic', considering that this is the **only** detail we find in the Torah concerning Terach - one could suggest that Terach's merit lay simply in his having been the first person to move his family towards Eretz Canaan.

[In the 'spirit' of 'ma'aseh avot siman la-banim' - Terach could actually be considered the first 'Zionist' (in a modern day sense). Like any good Zionist, Terach plans to 'make aliyah' and even encourages his family to do so, but he himself never makes it there.]

We may suggest, however, a more thematically significant approach. Terach and his offspring may represent a certain aspect of the bechira process - wherein there lies a potential to be chosen - but only if worthy. Terach's initiative in this regard may have granted the possibility of becoming part of 'chosen family' to any of his offspring who prove themselves deserving of this distinction.

Avraham Avinu not only follows his father's lead and continues to Eretz Canaan, but also follows faithfully God's command throughout. He then becomes the progenitor of God's special nation. Nachor, however, stays behind. Lot (Haran's son) had the opportunity to remain with Avraham, but detaches himself by choosing the 'good life' in Kikar Ha-yarden (see shiur on Parshat Lech Lecha). However, Nachor's granddaughter, Rivka, and great-granddaughters, Rachel & Lea, prove themselves worthy of joining the distinctive nation, and work their way back into the family of Avraham.

In fact, this may explain the reason for the Torah's minute detail of Rivka's hospitality - in the story of how she was chosen to become the wife for Yitzchak.

Even though the bechira process at times may appear random and indiscriminate, the framework of 'toldot Terach' may reflect the importance of personal commitment in earning that bechira. These observations can serve as a 'reminder' that our nation was not chosen simply for the purpose that we are to receive divine privilege, but rather towards the purpose that we understand and internalize the eternal responsibility of our

destiny.

shabbat shalom
menachem

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FOR FURTHER IYUN

1. See Ramban on 15:18 where he beautifully reviews each of God's promises to Avraham Avinu in Parshat Lech Lecha, and the nature of their progression, and most important - how each additional promise reflected some type of reward to Avraham for his idealistic behavior. Relate the underlying concept behind this Ramban to the main points of the above shiur. See also Seforno on 26:5 in relation to God's promise to Yitzchak, and the need of the Avot to 'prove' that they were worthy of their bechira.

2. 'Ten' generations - in our shiur, we noted that there were ten generations from Adam to Noach, and ten as well from Shem to Terach. To be more precise, there are really ten from Noach to Avraham (as Pirkei Avot mentions) and only eight from Shem to Terach, but we used the 'phrase' ten generations to reflect the common pattern of continuous list of a succession of toldot from one generation to the next beginning with one statement of 'eileh toldot' and ending with a final statement of 'eileh toldot'. The parallel remains the same; for the sake of uniformity, we simply refer to this pattern as 'ten' generations.

3. TOLDOT AVRAHAM

We saw earlier that every chosen individual in Sefer Breishit receives his own 'eileh toldot' **except** Avraham! If indeed the header toldot reflects this bechira process, then certainly Avraham himself deserves one. Yet, for some reason, the Torah includes the story of Avraham's bechira within the category of toldot Terach. This enigma may suggest something unique about either Avraham's own bechira or his ability to have children (or both). In other words, Avraham's lack of toldot [remember: literally, offspring] may relate to his infertility. He and Sarah have a child only after a long and exasperating process.

Avraham and Sarah's names must be changed and a miracle must be performed simply for the child to be born. Even then, the process has yet to be completed - the child must return to Hashem at the Akeida. Thus, the lack of any mention of 'toldot Avraham' could reflect the difficult travails Avraham must endure in order to father and raise his child. [This may also explain why 'Avraham **holid** et Yitzchak' is added to 'eileh toldot Yitzchak'.]

Nonetheless, the question still remains stronger than the answer.

PARSHAT CHAYEI SARAH - 3 mini shiurim

SHIUR #1 - "HASHEM ELOKEI HA-SHAMAYIM"

How should one describe God?

In Parshat Chayei Sarah, we find that Avraham Avinu appears to contradict himself in this regard. First he describes Hashem as "the God of the Heavens and the God of the Earth" (see 24:3), and then only four psukim later he describes Him as just "the God of the Heavens" (see 24:7).

This apparent contradiction caught the attention of many commentators, and hence provides us with an excellent opportunity to take a quick peek into their world of 'parshanut'.

To better appreciate the various answers that they provide to the above question, we must first review the context of these two psukim.

In chapter 24, Avraham Avinu is sending his servant to his 'home-town' of Charan in search of a wife for his son Yitzchak.

[Most likely, 'his servant' refers to Eliezer, even though his name is never mentioned (even once) in this entire parshah! In our shiur, we rely on this assumption.]

To guarantee that Eliezer will faithfully fulfill that mission, Avraham makes his servant take an oath in the Name of:

"Hashem, the God of the Heavens, and the God of the

Earth (see 24:1-4).

However, two psukim later, when Avraham must allay Eliezer's worry that the wife he finds for Yitzchak may prefer to stay in Charan (see 24:5-6) - he promises his servant that:

"**Hashem the God of the Heavens**, who had taken him [Avraham] from his homeland..." will send an 'angel' to assist him (see 24:7).

The classical commentators are troubled by two problems. First of all, Avraham's description of God as "Hashem, the God of the Heavens AND the God of the Earth" (24:3) seems to imply that there may be multiple gods, i.e. one of the heavens AND one of the earth! Why couldn't Avraham simply have stated "Hashem, the God of 'heaven and earth", just like the first pasuk of Breishit implies.

Secondly, they are bothered by the question mentioned in our introduction, i.e.: Why does Avraham 'shorten' his second description of God to simply "the God of the Heavens", without mentioning 'the earth' at all?

In our shiur, we will discuss how the commentators deal with these two questions.

HEAVENS 'and' EARTH

In relation to the first question, most all of the commentators share one basic approach, i.e. Avraham's peculiar statement of 'the God of the Heavens AND the God of the Earth' - relates directly to his current predicament.

As we will see, each commentator will consider one of the following points:

- [A] Avraham's is talking to his servant;
[who may have a over-simplistic understanding of God]
- [B] He is administering an oath at this time;
- [C] He is searching for a wife for his son; and
- [D] He is sending his servant to his home-town of Charan.

A. RADAK - 'Helping his servant understand'

Radak offers a 'philosophical' explanation of Avraham's statement to Eliezer. He claims that Avraham may be worried that his servant - even though he surely believes in the existence of 'the God of the heavens' - may not believe that God's Providence extends over mundane matters down on earth as well. Therefore, Avraham emphasizes this point in his opening statement, that he is not only the God overseeing what happens in the Heavens, but He also oversees what happens on earth.

However, when Avraham later explains to Eliezer how God had earlier spoken to him (see 24:7), it is sufficient for Avraham to mention only 'Elokei Ha-shamayim' - the God of the Heavens.

B. SFORNO - 'Scare tactics'

Seferno explains that Avraham must impress upon his servant the severity of this oath. To assure that his servant will keep this oath, he reminds him that God controls not only the matters of the 'earth' - and hence his fate in 'this world' - but also the matters of 'heaven', which implies his fate in the 'world to come' (i.e. after death). By this statement, Avraham warns his servant that should he break this oath, he could expect not only a punishment in this world, but also in the world to come!

C. IBN EZRA - 'Finding one's beshert'

Ibn Ezra relates to the fact the Avraham is sending his servant on a mission to find a wife. Even though finding a spouse may appear to Eliezer as a mundane event taking place on 'earth', Avraham must convince Eliezer that this marriage has been decided upon in the 'heavens'. This commentary may actually be based on the Gemara in Moed Katan 18b ("Amar Shmuel..." - in the middle of the daf), that on each day a 'bat-kol' proclaims that the daughter of 'ploni' will be married to the 'ploni'.

D. RAMBAN - "Eretz Yisrael"

Finally, Ramban offers a very 'zionistic' explanation. Unlike the other commentators who understand 'aretz' as referring to the 'earth', i.e. to events taking place on earth or in this world,

Ramban understands 'aretz' as referring to the 'land of Israel'. Because his servant is now leaving Eretz Yisrael (but must bring Yitzchak's future wife back to this land), Avraham adds the phrase 'Elokei ha-aretz' to the standard phrase of 'Elokei ha-shamayim' in his description of God at this time.

ELOKEI HA-SHAMAYIM

Rashi does not deal directly with our first question. However, he does answer our second question (i.e. why Avraham only mentions 'Elokei ha-shamayim' in 24:7); and while doing so, he provides a solution for the first question as well.

Rashi, based on a Midrash of R. Pinchas in Breishit Rabba 59:8, differentiates between Man's perception of God BEFORE Avraham was chosen (as reflected in 24:7), and Man's perception of God now (in 24:3).

When God had first commanded Avraham to leave his homeland (see 24:7), no one on earth recognized God; therefore His Kingdom was only in Heaven. However, once Avraham came to the Land and began to proclaim His Name to the public (see Breishit 12:8 and Ramban on that pasuk), His Kingdom is now known 'on earth' as well. Therefore, when Avraham now sends Eliezer on his mission, God can be referred to as both 'Elokei ha-shamayim' AND 'Elokei ha-aretz'.

Note that Rashi's explanation is definitely not the 'simple pshat' of these psukim. Clearly, the interpretations offered by the other commentators provide a more 'local' explanation for the specific use of this phrase. Nonetheless, this Midrash definitely reflects one of the primary themes of Sefer Breishit (as discussed at length in our shiur on Parshat Lech Lecha), and hence may reflect the 'pshat' of the Sefer, rather than the 'pshat' of the pasuk.

[Here we find a beautiful example of the art of Midrash, taking the opportunity of an apparent problem in the 'pshat' of a pasuk to deliver an important message concerning the entire Sefer.]

In conclusion, it is important to note a common denominator to all the interpretations presented above. We find that - when referring to God - it is not necessary to always refer to Him by the same Name. Instead, we refer to God in the context of our relationship with Him.

For example, in the Ten Commandments, we speak of God as Hashem, Kel KANA (see Shmot 20:2-4), and when Moshe receives the Second Luchot he speaks of God as "Hashem, Kel RACHUM ve-CHANUN" (see Shmot 34:6-8). In other words, the appellation that we use for God relates to the specific situation we are in.

The best example is from daily tefilla, when we begin by describing God as "Hashem, Elokeinu ve-Elokei avoteinu..."; then in each of the 19 'brachot' that follow, we bless God based on one of various attributes in on our relationship with Him. Next time you 'daven', take note!

SHIUR #2 - AVRAHAM AVINU & 'REAL' ESTATE

The beginning of this week's Parsha is well known for its detailed description of the bargaining between Avraham and Efron. Some claim that Efron's intention all along was to attain the highest price (see 23:16), explaining that his generous opening offer (to give Avraham the land gratis - see 23:5-6) was nothing more than a ploy. But if this assumption were correct, why would Sefer Breishit find it necessary to discuss this event in such minute detail?

If, on the other hand, we assume that the stories of Sefer Breishit help develop its theme of 'bechira', then perhaps we should view this narrative from the perspective of that theme. Let's give it a try.

TWO PERCEPTIONS

To better appreciate what's going on, let's examine both sides of the bargaining table - Bnei Chet and Avraham:

1) Bnei Chet's perception:

Efron and his people [Bnei Chet] reign sovereign in Chevron and the surrounding region. As their families had been living in those hills for generations, they have every reason to think that they would continue to do so for future generations as well. In their eyes, Avraham is simply a 'wandering Jew', posing no threat whatsoever to their sovereignty.

Recall as well that Avraham had lived in Mesopotamia until age 75, and, ever since his migration to Cannan he spent much of his time traveling - to and from cities - such as Shechem, Bet-El, Chevron, and Beer Sheva. Having never established permanent residence, Avraham represents no challenge to the sovereign government of the Chittim.

Furthermore, Avraham constantly 'called out in the Name of God' wherever he went. His teaching had earned him such a widespread reputation that Bnei Chet refer to him as "nasi Elokim ata betocheinu" - you are a prince a God in our midst (see 23:6). As his career sent him constantly 'on the road', Bnei Chet had no reason to believe that Avraham's offspring would one day return to attempt to gain sovereignty over their land.

Therefore, there is no need to doubt the sincerity of their original offer to grant Avraham [at no charge] any burial plot he desires (see 23:5-7). Even in our own time, many societies express their appreciation for individuals who preach morality and dedicate their entire life to God by offering various benefits [what we call a 'clergy discount'].

Their generous offer simply reflects their sympathetic understanding of Avraham's difficult situation - a wandering 'man of God' who needs a place to bury his wife. For Bnei Chet, this entire incident was of little significance - Avraham posed no threat to their future or permanent control of the land.

2) Avraham Avinu's perception:

In contrast, Avraham Avinu perceived his situation in an entirely different light. His wife's death and the need for a burial site awakened his realization that aside from a Divine Promise, he had no real 'hold' in the land. For him, the purchase of a family burial plot constituted the first step towards a permanent attachment to the land. He wants to ensure that his children and grandchildren will return to this site and feel a true connection to the land.

Therefore, Avraham insists on paying the full price, as he has no interest at this time for 'handouts' or presents. He wants it known that this burial plot and its surrounding field belong to his family. Therefore, not only does Avraham insist on paying full price, he also demands that it be purchased in the presence of all the community leaders ("le-chol baei sha'ar iro" / read 23:16-20 carefully). In Avraham Avinu's eyes, this is a momentous occasion - he has now purchased his first 'achuza' [inheritance] in 'Eretz Canaan' (note 23:19-20!).

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FOR FURTHER IYUN:

In the above shiur, we discussed how the purchase of 'ma'arat ha-machpela' may relate to Avraham Avinu's special connection to the land, as promised to him by God. To further appreciate this connection, review 23:16-20 and compare them to 17:7-8. Note especially 'achuza' and 'Eretz Canaan', and relate this to our shiur on 'brit mila'. Note as well 25:9-10, 49:29-30 & 50:13!

SHIUR #3 "ZERA VA-ARETZ"

- A PROMISE, COVENANT, AND OATH

Just prior to sending his servant in search of a wife for his son, Avraham briefly reviews the various stages of his 'bechira': "Hashem Elokei ha-shamayim asher lekachani mi-BEIT AVI u-ME'ERETZ MOLADETI ve-asher DIBER li, ve-asher NISHBA li leimor - le-ZAR'ACHA ETEIN et ha-ARETZ ha-zot..." (24:7)

In the following mini-shiur we attempt to explain the meaning of each phrase in this pasuk.

Recall from Parshat Lech Lecha that Hashem had made three promises (see 12:1-3, 12:7, 13:15) and two covenants (see 15:18, 17:8) concerning the future of Avraham's offspring in the Promised Land. In each of these promises, the key words repeated over and over again were "era' [offspring] and 'aretz' [the Promised Land/ e.g. "le-zar'acha etein et ha-aretz ha-zot"].

In Avraham's opening statement to his servant, we find an obvious parallel to the beginning of Parshat Lech Lecha, as:

"Asher lekachani mi-BEIT AVI u-ME'ERETZ MOLADETI" clearly echoes God's opening command of:

"Lech Lecha me-artzecha, u-mMOLADETECHA u-miBEIT AVICHA."

However, the continuation of this statement: "e-asher DIBER li, ve-asher NISHBA li leimor ..." raises a question concerning the precise OATH ('nishba') to which Avraham refers.

This question sparked a controversy among the commentators. Rashi explains that this oath was made at Brit Bein Ha-betarim, while Radak contends that it refers to the Akeida.

The reason for this controversy is quite simple. The term 'shvu'a' - oath - appears only once throughout all of God's promises to Avraham - specifically in God's 'hitgalut' to Avraham after the Akeida:

"bi nishbati ne'um Hashem, ki ..." (see 22:16)

Thus, Radak cites the Akeida as the source for "nishba li." Rashi, however, rejects this contention, presumably because nowhere at the Akeida does God say anything similar to "le-zar'acha etein et ha-aretz ha-zot." Rashi therefore cites as the source of God's oath Brit Bein Ha-betarim, which includes this very promise:

"ba-yom ha-hu karat Hashem [note Shem Havaya, as above in 24:7] et Avram brit leimor: **le-zar'acha natati et ha-aretz ha-zot...**" (15:18).

Even though the actual word 'shvu'a' is never mentioned at Brit Bein Ha-Betarim, God's establishment of a covenant with Avraham may itself constitute a guarantee equivalent to a promise accompanied by an oath.

In truth, a closer look at the psukim relating to the Akeida may reveal that BOTH Rashi and Radak are correct: God had stated:

"By myself I SWEAR ["bi nishba'ti"], the Lord declares: Because you have done this and have not withheld your son... I will bestow My blessing upon you ["barech avarechecha"] and make your descendants as numerous as the stars of the heaven ["ke-kochvei ha-shamayim"] ... and your descendants will CONQUER the gates of their enemies ["ve-YIRASH zar'acha et sha'ar oyav"]..." (15:17).

Considering this context - i.e. the aftermath of the Akeida - we can well understand why this oath focuses primarily on Avraham's descendants "zera", who will evolve from Yitzchak. Hence, the promise regarding the Land emerges as less dominant a theme in God's vow in contrast to the promise of 'zera'.

Nonetheless, this oath does contain several expressions taken directly from God's earlier promises to Avraham concerning the 'aretz', especially Brit Bein Ha-betarim. The following table highlights the literary parallel between God's promise at the Akeida and previous promises to Avraham:

AKEIDA (22:17)	PREVIOUS PROMISES
ki barech avarechecha	va-avarechecha..ve-heye bracha (First Promise - 12:2)
ve-harbeh arbeh et zar'acha	habet na ha-shamayma – u-

ke-kochevei ha-shamayim	re'eh et ha-kochavim... ko yhiyeh zar'echa (Brit Bein Ha-Betarim - 15:5)
Ve-yirash zar'acha et sha'ar oyvav	lo yirashcha zeh, ki im asher yetzeh mi-mey'echa, hu yirashecha (Brit Bein Ha'Btarim - 15:4)
Ve-hitbarchu be-zar'acha kol goyei ha-aretz (15:18)	Ve-nivrchu becha kol mishpehot ha-adama (First Promise - 12:3)

This parallel demonstrates that God's oath after the Akeida reaffirms His previous promises and covenants.

Furthermore, Avraham's statement of "ve-asher nishba li leimor le-zar'acha etein et ha-aretz ha-zot," can be understood as his own understanding of God's promise BOTH in Brit Bein Ha-Betarim (shitat Rashi) AND the Akeida (shitat ha-Radak), as one essentially complements the other.

This interpretation also explains the redundancy in Avraham's statement: "asher DIBER li ve-'asher NISHBA li":

* "asher DIBER li" -

most probably refers to Brit Bein Ha-Betarim, which begins with "haya DVAR Hashem el Avram..."

(15:1, see also 15:4);

* while "asher NISHBA li"

refers the oath of the Akeida (22:16).

THE OATH

Why is an oath necessary in ADDITION to God's original promise and covenant? Furthermore, why does God make this oath only after the Akeida?

The answer to these questions relates to the nature of the original promise and covenant, as explained in the last three shiurim.

Recall that in reaction to the events of Migdal Bavel (mankind's development into an anthropocentric society), God chose Avraham Avinu IN ORDER THAT his offspring become a special nation that would lead all nations toward a theocentric existence [our shiur on Noach]. Three promises and two covenants guaranteed Avraham Avinu a special Land ('aretz') to allow his offspring ('zera') to fulfill its destiny [our shiur on Lech Lecha]. This goal is to be achieved by this special nation's embodiment of the values of 'tzedek u-mishpat' [our shiur on Parshat Vayera].

One could suggest that in recognition of Avraham Avinu's display of complete faith in, and dedication to, God, as reflected specifically in the story of the Akeida, God elevates the status of His original promise from a 'brit' [covenant] to a 'shvu'a' [oath].

But what's the real difference between a covenant and an oath?

A covenantal arrangement is almost by definition bilateral; for it allows for one side to break his agreement should the other party break his. At the Akeida, God takes His obligation one step further for an oath reflects a unilateral commitment, binding regardless of what the other side does.

God now swears that even should Am Yisrael break their side of the covenant, He will never break His original promise. Although His nation may sin and consequently be punished, they will forever remain His people.

Herein may lie the primary significance of the Akeida, as it relates to the developing theme of Sefer Breishit. As the story of Avraham Avinu nears its conclusion, God brings His relationship with Bnei Yisrael to the level where He will never abandon us.

The Akeida, the greatest example of 'mesirut nefesh', symbolizes an indispensable prerequisite for Am Yisrael's development into God's special nation - their willingness to dedicate their entire life to the service of God. The site of the Akeida, Har Ha-Moriya, later becomes the site of the Bet Ha-mikdash (see II Chronicles 3:1), the most prominent symbol of that relationship.

shabbat shalom,
Menachem

OH RNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

The Master of Chaos

“And Avraham expired and died at a good old age, mature and content...” (25:08)

Abutterfly flapping its wings in Brazil can cause a tornado in Texas.

Chaos theory is an interdisciplinary theory and branch of mathematics focusing on the study of chaos: dynamical systems whose apparently random states of disorder and irregularities are actually governed by underlying patterns and deterministic laws that are highly sensitive to initial conditions. Chaos theory states that within the apparent randomness of chaotic complex systems, there are underlying patterns, interconnectedness, constant feedback loops, repetition, self-similarity, fractals, and self-organization. The butterfly effect, an underlying principle of chaos, describes how a small change in one state of a deterministic nonlinear system can result in large differences in a later state (meaning that there is sensitive dependence on initial conditions). A metaphor for this behavior is that a butterfly flapping its wings in Brazil can cause a tornado in Texas.

Small differences in initial conditions, such as those due to errors in measurements or due to rounding errors in numerical computation, can yield widely diverging outcomes for such dynamical systems, rendering long-term prediction of their behavior impossible in general. This can happen even though these systems are deterministic, meaning that their future behavior follows a unique evolution and

is fully determined by their initial conditions with no random elements involved. In other words, the deterministic nature of these systems does not make them predictable. This behavior is known as deterministic chaos, or simply chaos. The theory was summarized by Edward Lorenz as: Chaos: When the present determines the future, but the approximate present does not approximately determine the future.

Chaotic behavior exists in many natural systems, including fluid flow, heartbeat irregularities, weather and climate. It also occurs spontaneously in some systems with artificial components, such as the stock market and road traffic. This behavior can be studied through the analysis of a chaotic mathematical model, or through analytical techniques such as recurrence plots and Poincaré maps. Chaos theory has applications in a variety of disciplines, including meteorology, anthropology, sociology, environmental science, computer science, engineering, economics, ecology, pandemic crisis management.

I've just finished reading a fascinating book called "Chaos: Making a New Science" by James Gleick. It's a tantalizing book that made me regret not having applied myself with more seriousness to learning mathematics at school.

“Chaos” turns much of classical physics on its head:

“The idea that all these classical deterministic systems we’d learned about could generate randomness was intriguing. We were driven to understand what made that tick. You can’t appreciate the kind of revelation that is unless you’ve been brainwashed by six or seven years of a typical physics curriculum. You’re taught that there are classical models where everything is determined by initial conditions, and then there are quantum mechanical models where things are determined but you have to contend with a limit on how much initial information you can gather. Nonlinear was a word that you only encountered in the back of the book. A physics student would take a math course and the last chapter would be on nonlinear equations. You would usually skip that, and, if you didn’t, all they would do is take these nonlinear equations and reduce them to linear equations, so you just get approximate solutions anyway. It was just an exercise in frustration. We had no concept of the real difference that nonlinearity makes in a model. The idea that an equation could bounce around in an apparently random way — that was pretty exciting. You would say, ‘Where is this random motion coming from?’”

And:

“It was a realization that here is a whole realm of physical experience that just doesn’t fit in the current framework. Why wasn’t that part of what we were taught? We had a chance to look around the immediate world—a world so mundane it was wonderful—and understand something. They enchanted themselves and dismayed their professors with leaps to

questions of determinism, the nature of intelligence, the direction of biological evolution. The glue that held us together was a long-range vision... It was striking to us that if you take regular physical systems which have been analyzed to death in classical physics, but you take one little step away in parameter space, you end up with something to which all of this huge body of analysis does not apply. The phenomenon of chaos could have been discovered long, long ago. It wasn’t, in part because this huge body of work on the dynamics of regular motion didn’t lead in that direction. But if you just look, there it is. It brought home the point that one should allow oneself to be guided by the physics, by observations, to see what kind of theoretical picture one could develop. In the long run we saw the investigation of complicated dynamics as an entry point that might lead to an understanding of really, really complicated dynamics.”

People don’t know what they see. They see what they think they know.

“And Avraham expired and died at a good old age, mature and content...”

In what sense was Avraham “mature and content”? He could see the order in the “chaos” after looking into every aspect of Creation — higher and further than anyone before him. As a result, he could recognize his Creator. Avraham was indeed a very special soul who could see that “mother nature” has a Father.

Q & A

Questions

1. Name the four couples buried in Kiryat Arba.
2. What did Sarah hear that caused her death?
3. What title of honor did the Bnei Chet bestow upon Avraham?
4. Where was Avraham born?
5. How were Avraham's camels distinguished?
6. What is meant by "all the good of his master in his hand"?
7. What special character trait did Eliezer seek when choosing a wife for Yitzchak?
8. Why did Avraham's servant, Eliezer, run toward Rivka?
9. Why did Lavan run to greet Eliezer?
10. When Lavan told Eliezer that the house was cleared out, what did he remove?
11. Who did Eliezer want Yitzchak to marry?
12. Aside from Eliezer, to which other people did Rivka offer to give water?
13. Lavan answered Eliezer before his father, Betuel, had a chance. What does this indicate about Lavan's character?
14. What did Rivka mean when she said "I will go?"
15. What blessing did Rivka's family give her before she departed?
16. Who was Keturah?
17. What gift did Avraham give to Yitzchak?
18. How old was Avraham when he died?
19. For how many years did Yaakov attend the Yeshiva of Ever?
20. How many times is Eliezer's name mentioned in this week's Parsha?

Answers

1. 23:2 - Adam and Chava, Avraham and Sara, Yitzchak and Rivka, Yaakov and Leah.
2. 23:2 - That Yitzchak was almost slaughtered.
3. 23:6 - Prince of G-d.
4. 24:7 - Ur Kasdim.
5. 24:10 - They were muzzled, so they wouldn't graze in the fields of others.
6. 24:10 - Eliezer carried a document in which Avraham gave all he owned to Yitzchak so that people would want their daughter to marry him.
7. 24:14 - He sought someone who excelled in performing acts of kindness.
8. 24:17 - He saw that the waters of the well rose when she approached.
9. 24:29 - Lavan coveted his money.
10. 24:31 - Idols.
11. 24:39 - His own daughter.
12. 24:44 - To the men who accompanied Eliezer.
13. 24:50 - That he was wicked.
14. 24:58 - I will go even if you don't want me to go.
15. 24:60 - That the blessings given to Avraham would continue through her children.
16. 25:1 - Hagar.
17. 25:5 - The power of blessing.
18. 25:7 - 175 years old.
19. 25:17 - 14 years.
20. None.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

The City of Four

When the Torah relates that Abraham's wife Sarah died in the City of Hebron, it actually uses an alternate name for the City of the Forefathers: "And Sarah died in Kiryat Arba, which is Hebron..." (Gen. 23:2). The Bible repeats this identification of Kiryat Arba with Hebron several times (Gen. 35:27, Joshua 14:5, 15:13, 20:7, 21:11, and Judges 1:10), making sure that we realize that the two names refer to the same place. The Midrash (*Bereishet Rabbah* 58:4) tells us that this city has four names, i.e. the two mentioned above, plus Eshkol and Mamre. In this essay we explore the possible meanings and etymologies of the city's various names, while discovering some interesting points about the history of Hebron.

The city Hebron is seemingly mentioned in the Amarna letters and in Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions, where it appears as one of the important centers of the Land of Canaan. The name *Chevron* seems to be derived from the Hebrew/Semitic root CHET-BET-REISH, which means "connection" or "friend."

When discussing the relationship between G-d and Abraham, the Midrash (*Bereishet Rabbah* 88:13) calls the latter "G-d's *chaver na'ah*" ("nice friend"). Rabbeinu Efrayim (to Num. 13:22) notes that the *gematria* of *Chevron* equals that of *chaver na'ah*; thus the very name of Hebron alludes to its most illustrious citizen — Abraham. Additionally, Rabbeinu Efrayim (to Gen. 37:14) notes that the *gematria* of the name *Chevron* equals that of the phrase "this is Abraham" (=266). These explanations are paralleled in the Arabic name for the city of Hebron — al-Khalil, which literally means "the friend [of G-d]" — another obvious allusion to Abraham.

Hebron also appears in the Bible as the proper name of Moses' and Aaron's uncle, as the Bible reports that their grandfather Kohat had a son

named Hebron (Ex. 6:18, Num. 3:19, I Chron. 5:28, 6:3, 23:12). Rabbeinu Efrayim takes this name as an allusion to the role of the Kohanim, who officiated over sacrifices, hence forging the connection (*chibbur*) between the Jews and their Father in Heaven, and who would consume holy foodstuff in "groupings" (*chaburahs*).

The Bible clarifies that *Kiryat Arba* is an *older* name for the city of Hebron (Joshua 14:15, Judges 1:10). The name *Kiryat Arba* literally means "City of Four" or "Tetrapolis." But what does the city of Hebron have to do with the number four? The Midrash (*Bereishet Rabbah* 58:4) lists several explanations:

1. *Four* righteous men originally lived in the city and were circumcised there (Aner, Eshkol, Mamre, and Abraham).
2. *Four* patriarchs were buried there (Adam, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob).
3. *Four* matriarchs were buried there (Eve, Sarah, Rebecca, and Leah).
4. *Four* giants ruled the city (Achiman, Sheshai, Talmai, and their father).
5. Hebron was the base from which Abraham chased the *four* kings.
6. *Four* parties received portions in that city: the tribe of Judah, the Levites, the Kohanim, and the family of Caleb.
7. Hebron is one of only *four* rocky areas in the Holy Land, which highlights the geographic excellence of that land.

Additionally, Rashi (to Gen. 23:2) synthesizes the second and third explanations cited in the Midrash by explaining that Hebron is called *Kiryat Arba* because of the *four* couples buried therein.

Rabbeinu Bachaya Ibn Chalava (1255-1340) and Rabbi Yehuda Ibn Chalava (a son of the famous 13th century scholar Maharam Chalava) offer another explanation: Hebron is related to the

number *four* because it was inherited by the Tribe of Judah, whose patronym was Jacob's *fourth* son.

Elsewhere, Rashi (to Joshua 14:15) takes a totally different approach to understanding the name *Kiryat Arba*. He writes that the word *Arba* should not be understood in the sense of "four," but should be taken as a proper name. Hence, *Kiryat Arba* means "City of Arba." Rashi explains that Arba was the name of the father of the three giants associated with the city. Those three giants were slain when the Jews conquered the Holy Land (Num. 13:22, Joshua 15:14, Judges 1:10). This basic approach is also adopted by *Daat Zekanim* (to Gen. 23:2) and *Ibn Ezra* (there). Rabbi Abraham Maimuni (1186-1237) similarly writes that Arba was either the founder or first king of the city. By the way, the king of Hebron in Joshua's time was named Hoham (Joshua 10:3).

Rabbi Avraham Menachem Rappaport (1520-1596) points out a problem with explaining *Kiryat Arba* as a reference to a person named Arba. He notes that in Genesis 35:27 the city is referred to as *Kiryat Ha'Arba*, with the definite article *ha* ("the") prefacing the word *Arba*. He notes that if Arba was a proper name, the definite article would be inappropriate. Thus, the presence of the letter HEY before the word *Arba* suggests that that word must be read as a common noun ("four"), not a proper noun ("Arba"). Other scholars suggest that the name *Kiryat Arba* is of non-Semitic origin, and originally had nothing to do with the number "four" or a giant named Arba.

Rashi (to Gen. 35:27) partially circumvents this problem by explaining that in two-word names the definite article sometimes appears in the beginning of the second word, even though it applies to the entire two-word compound. Radak (there) also seems to address this issue by explaining that the definite article is appropriate there because Hebron is named *Kiryat Arba* for two reasons: because of Arba, the father of the giants, *and* because altogether four giants ruled the city. Thus, since the word *Arba* in the city's name *also* means "four," it can be preceded with the definite article.

Interestingly, when the Ten Spies reported that they saw "sons of giants" on their scouting trip to the Holy Land, Targum Jonathan (to Deut. 1:28) renders the verse "sons of Ephron the giant." Now,

Ephron was the name of the man from whom Abraham purchased the Cave of Machpela in Hebron (Gen. 23, 25:9, 49:29-30, 50:13). What does Ephron have to do with the giants who lived in Hebron?

Rabbi Dr. Moshe Zidel (d. 1971) speculates that Targum Jonathan understood that Ephron and Arba were the same person. He justifies this from a linguistic perspective by noting that the root of the Hebrew word *arba* ("four") is REISH-BET-AYIN. This is seen in the ordinal form of the word, *revii* ("fourth"), in which the initial ALEPH is dropped. Accordingly, Rabbi Zidel posits that *arba* relates to the root AYIN-PEH-REISH ("dust"), which is at the core of the name Ephron, by way of metathesis (i.e., rearranging the consonants) and the interchangeability of the letters BET and PEH. Moreover, the Akkadian word *turbu'u* means "dust" and its root is equivalent to the Hebrew REISH-AYIN-BET. A possible Hebrew cognate of this word (*rova*) seems to be twinned with the Hebrew word *avak*, which also means "dust" (see Num. 23:10). Based on all this, to Rabbi Zidel it makes sense to say that Ephron and Arba are the same person. (However, *Tosefta d'Targum* and *Peshitta* to Joshua 15:13-14, 21:11 explicitly identify Arba with Tzochar, the father of Ephron, and the three giant brothers as Ephron's sons; see also Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky's *Taama d'Kra* to Gen. 23:8.)

Taking this a step further, Rabbi Zidel theorizes that the very name Hebron is actually derived from the name Ephron, due to the interchangeability of the letters AYIN and CHET, as well as BET and PEH. Accordingly, the names *Kiryat Arba* and *Chevron* are both alternate ways of associating the city with Ephron.

In contemporary times, *Kiryat Arba* refers to a Jewish settlement outside the city of Hebron proper.

As mentioned above, Mamre and Eshkol are both alternate names for Hebron/*Kiryat Arba*, but they are also the names of Abraham's comrades (Gen. 14:13, 14:24). The Bible identifies the place named Mamre with Hebron and *Kiryat Arba* (Gen. 23:19, 35:27). On the one hand, it seems from a literal reading that the Plains of Mamre *are in* Hebron (Gen. 13:18), but not synonymous with it.

Alternatively, Rashi (to Gen. 35:27) explains that Mamre is the name of the plain in which Hebron is located. Rabbi David Zvi Hoffmann (1843-1921) theorizes that the city was originally named *Elonei Mamre* after its warlord Mamre, and it was only later when the giants conquered it that it assumed the name Kiryat Arba.

In describing the Ten Spies' itinerary, the Bible reports that they travelled to Hebron (Num. 13:22), but in the very next verse relates that they arrived at Nachal Eshkol (Num. 13:23). This suggests that Eshkol is an alternate name for Hebron, as intimated by the Midrash cited earlier. The Bible explicitly records that Nachal Eshkol was

called so because the Ten Spies took an *eshkol* ("cluster [of grapes]") from there (Num. 13:24). Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky explains that even though the site was already known as Nachal Eshkol when the spies arrived there, the city's original name was a tribute to Abraham's colleague Eshkol, whose name is spelled without the letter VAV. Because of this, the place-name Nachal Eshkol is initially spelled sans the letter VAV, but in subsequent instances of that name it is spelled with the letter VAV, in allusion to the aforementioned "cluster" of grapes.

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COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

THE BLESSINGS OF THE SHEMA (PART 5)

“The most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched – they must be felt with the heart.”

(Helen Keller)

The second blessing continues: “Enlighten our eyes in Your Torah; attach our hearts to Your commandments...”

The plea to “enlighten our eyes” is actually one of the most beautiful requests that can be found in our prayers. Understanding Torah and creating fresh and new ideas within Torah is not reserved for only the most brilliant to discover. When we ask G-d to “enlighten our eyes,” we are acknowledging that the ability to formulate novel concepts rests with how we delve into the Torah. It is not necessarily a “Mensa-level” IQ that brings forth innovative understanding and thought-provoking insights. Rather, it is purity of spirit and a genuine desire to understand G-d’s Torah that allows new concepts to be revealed.

his wisdom will endure. The fear of G-d is so intrinsic to a person’s spiritual growth, as the Talmud relates (Shabbat 31b) that Rabbi Shimon and Rabbi Elazar were once sitting together when their colleague, Rabbi Yaakov ben Acha, walked past them. One of them turned to the other and suggested they honor Rabbi Yaakov ben Acha by standing up for him because of his pronounced fear of sin. The other one suggested that they stand up because he was an extraordinarily brilliant Torah scholar. On hearing this, his friend wondered with bewilderment why there was any need to mention how great a Torah scholar Rabbi Yaakov ben Acha was. After having made it clear that he was an extremely righteous person, it was obvious that his fear of sin was far more significant than his prodigious Torah knowledge (see Rashi).

From where does the enlightenment that we are requesting originate? King David writes in Tehillim (111:10), “The beginning of wisdom is the fear of G-d.” King Solomon, echoing his father’s words (Proverbs 1:7) writes, “The fear of G-d is the beginning of wisdom.” Rashi explains that it is the fear of G-d that serves as the catalyst for engrossing oneself in the study of Torah. Or, as the brilliant French Torah scholar Rabbi Menachem ben Solomon Meiri (1249-1310) describes: fear of G-d is the foundation of a person’s knowledge and spiritual growth. And just as a building must have solid foundations to ensure that the building will not collapse, so too each person in their spiritual being must have foundations that are strong and sturdy to enable them to withstand the vicissitudes of life. In the timeless Ethics of the Fathers (3:9), our Sages teach us that when a scholar gives priority to fearing G-d over the pursuit of wisdom,

Fascinatingly enough, we first ask G-d to enlighten our eyes and only after that do we request that He fill our hearts with love for Him. It seems counterintuitive to request insights into the Torah and only after that to ask that we be filled with love for G-d. However, the Rabbis explain that the Torah is actually the fastest and most direct route to loving G-d. It is through in-depth study of Torah that we are able to experience an overwhelming love for G-d that supersedes everything. The Chazon Ish famously described the various stages of learning Torah uninterruptedly for ten hours starting from the sixth hour. According to the Chazon Ish, after seven hours of learning one feels a closeness and love for G-d that has not been felt up until now and the person fills up with a true joy that wells up from inside of them!

After having asked for insights into Torah and love for G-d, we then ask Him to “attach our hearts to Your commandments.” The inference of our request is that being enthusiastic and eager to fulfill the mitzvahs is not always easy. Even when we perform the mitzvahs on a regular and consistent basis, we need Divine assistance to help us feel verve and passion each time anew. Rabbi Shimon Schwab told of the one Shabbat he spent in the presence of the saintly Chofetz Chaim. The Torah portion read that Shabbat was Beshalach (*Shemot* chapters 14-17), which contains the description of the first time the Jewish nation received the manna, the food they would eat for the forty years in the wilderness. The Chofetz Chaim pointed out to the Yeshiva students who were gathered around his Shabbat table that the Midrash (*Shemot Rabbah* 25) relates that, with a few exceptions, the manna would have the taste of

whatever food the person eating thought about. The Chofetz Chaim then asked all those present what taste the manna would have if the person didn’t think about a particular food, just eating the manna as is. The students debated back and forth, offering different possibilities based on different descriptions of the manna found in the Torah. Finally, the Chofetz Chaim told them that the manna was a spiritual food, and, like all spiritual concepts, if a person does not think about it, it is tasteless. Then he added, with great passion, that there is nothing sweeter than delving into a page of Talmud – but that if a person does not think about what they are learning, that same page of Talmud becomes dry and “tasteless.”

To be continued...

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Sarah, the mother of the Jewish People, passes on at age 127. After mourning and eulogizing her, Avraham seeks to bury her in the Cave of Machpela. As this is the burial place of Adam and Chava, Avraham pays its owner, Ephron the Hittite, an exorbitant sum.

Avraham sends his faithful servant Eliezer to find a suitable wife for his son, Yitzchak, making him swear to choose a wife only from among Avraham's family. Eliezer travels to Aram Naharaim and prays for a sign. Providentially, Rivka appears. Eliezer asks for water. Not only does she give him water, but she draws water for all 10 of his thirsty camels (some 140 gallons)! This extreme kindness marks her as the right wife for Yitzchak and a suitable mother of the Jewish People. Negotiations with Rivka's father and her brother, Lavan, result in her leaving with Eliezer. Yitzchak brings Rivka into his mother Sarah's tent, marries her and loves her. He is then consoled for the loss of his mother.

Avraham remarries Hagar, who is renamed Keturah to indicate her improved ways. Six children are born to them. After giving them gifts, Avraham sends them to the East. Avraham passes away at the age of 175 and is buried next to Sarah in the Cave of Machpela.

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Rosh Hashana 9-15

A Blessing on Blossoming Fruit Trees

Rav Yehuda said, “A person who goes outside during the days [of the month] of Nissan and sees trees that are blossoming says, ‘Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the Universe, Who did not omit from His world anything, and created in it good creations and good trees to give pleasure to people.’”

This special *bracha*, known as “*birkat ha’ilanot*,” is codified with its halachic parameters in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 226. An interesting textual disagreement in the *bracha*’s wording is in the phrase “*sh’lo chiseir ba’olamo klum*.” According to the Gaon of Vilna, the word *davar* (“a thing”) is said in place of *klum* (“nothing” in Modern Hebrew, but apparently carrying the same meaning as “*davar*” in the context of this *bracha*.) Any grammarians who wish to share their thoughts on this?

What is the significance of the “month of Nissan” that is mentioned in the *gemara*? And does the mention of this month exclude all other times, such as *Tu B’Shevat*, the New Year of the Trees? Due to the special significance of the Land of Israel and its fruits, the time for *bracha* was established as being the time of year when the fruit trees blossom *there* – i.e. in Nissan.

However, if one does not live in Eretz Yisrael, many halachic authorities rule to say the *bracha* at the time when the fruit trees begin to blossom in that location – e.g. in the month of Tishrei in the Southern Hemisphere. The Aruch Hashulchan writes that in countries where fruit trees begin to blossom somewhat later than Nissan, those months would be the appropriate time for saying this *bracha*. Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank (1873-1960), renowned *Dayan* and Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, writes that a person in a country where trees blossom earlier than Nissan may say the *bracha* even earlier than Nissan.

Here are a few sample halachic details. One should say this *bracha* only when the trees bear edible fruit. Ideally,

one should say the *bracha* only when seeing at least two trees since the wording of the *beracha* is “*ilanot*” – in the plural. Some *Poskim* say that one should try to say the *bracha* over two different types of fruit trees. Preferably it should be said during the week and not on Shabbat to avoid any concern of using, shaking or breaking a part of the tree on Shabbat. As with any halachic matter, one should learn the relevant halachic texts and consult with a local halachic authority in order to not be in doubt about the correct time, place and manner for saying this *bracha*.

An interesting point is that women are obligated in the mitzvah of saying this *bracha* despite their being exempt from time-dependant mitzvahs as a general rule.

There are numerous fascinating Kabbalistic teachings and practices regarding this *bracha*. For example, Chacham Yosef Chaim of Bagdad, (*Ben Ish Chai*, 1832-1909) relates an important lesson to be learned from this *bracha* and its timing. During the winter, the tree is dry and withered, but in the spring it is in full bloom. A person who sees this revitalization in nature is also internally revitalized in his very being. Upon observing this dramatic transformation in the natural world, a person grows in his own personal inspiration and courage to climb up from any despair. It is a powerful reminder that Hashem has given us the wherewithal for self-renewal and growing closer to Him.

▪ Rosh Hashana 11a

LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Hershman

Authentic Innocence and Beauty

The Torah leads us to the end of our noble Matriarch's life, and has inscribed upon her monument the following words: *Sarah's life was a hundred years, and twenty years, and seven years: years of Sarah's life.*

Our Sages, noting the atypical way in which her lifespan is recorded, comment that Sarah's life is divided into three distinct periods. She did not live for 127 years, but rather for one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years. Our Sages regard these words as the perfect character sketch of the most worthy life. They draw the following parallel between these distinct phases of childhood, young adulthood and old age: *at one hundred she was as innocent as when she was twenty, and at twenty as beautiful as when she was seven.* Beauty at seven? Innocence at twenty? Should it not be the reverse?

But if we were to contemplate beauty... we would notice that there are many more beautiful children than young men and women. Hardly any child is born ugly – all newborns are beautiful. A child's face is beautiful because passions and wrongdoing have not yet etched their lines on its face. The face of one who has not yet known rage or resent, avarice or arrogance, vanity or vulgarity, will reflect none of those ills in its countenance. Those destructive paintbrushes stroke the self-portrait of man only beyond his childhood years – his face becomes a reflection of his true face. And so, as Sarah's life was one uninterrupted song of goodness and virtue, her true face retained the beauty of childhood. Had Sarah mounted her own picture of Dorian Grey in her tent, it never would have grown distorted. At young adulthood, the prime of unchecked passion, her face remained as it was at seven. Decades could have passed, and not a single wrinkle or blemish would have appeared on that portrait. For there were no blotches or misstrokes in her character. Beauty, in fact, is more than skin deep.

And if we were to contemplate innocence... our Sages teach here that the peak of innocence is not reached in infancy. Those who are genuinely sinless must have first developed clarity of mind to have chosen that path. A child's innocence is mostly a product of his unsuspecting nature. He is still too simple-minded to sin. In our notion of outgrowing this innocence, as man grows in his worldly wisdom, he is bound to do evil. But consider how the view of our Sages ennobles man! Age twenty: mind and body are mature, and judgment is sharpened, but the heart is still wide and warm, eager to embrace things good and noble. Idealism is the child of this "innocence." Sarah never outgrew this innocence – at one hundred her heart still swelled with the loving-kindness, hope, and energy it did at twenty.

These years together are called *chayei Sarah*. She *lived* in all of them. She took the crowning quality of each stage of life into the next stage. A phrase describing the final days of the noble and righteous is *ba bayamim*, literally "he comes through the days." (Bereishet 24:1 - Avraham; Melachim I 1:1 - David) He does not sink in his days. He passes through them. He retains the spiritual and moral attainments of his past and takes them with him into the future. The threads of purity in childhood are not dropped or worn out – they continue their stitch into adulthood, where new colors and shades are added. And that spool of idealism is not replaced by those of economy, pride, and pragmatism. Instead, all of his days are stitched, through and through, with the color of its virtue.

- Sources: Bereishet, 23:1; Collected Writings, Vol. 8, "Beauty and Long Life," pp. 137-144

Perek Shira: The Song of Existence

by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

THE SONG OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN

The Garden of Eden says:

[Hashem says,] "Awaken, north wind, and come, south wind, blow through My garden, causing its fragrances to flow out."

[The Jewish nation responds,] "Let my Beloved come to His garden and eat His delectable fruits."

(Shir HaShirim 4:16)

The Garden of Eden sings about the true, unending pleasure experienced after this world.

It describes how Hashem invites the north and south winds to circulate their divine fragrances for the pleasure of the righteous within it. North is the direction which symbolizes the physical aspects of creation, and thus its wind delights the soul for righteous usage of the physical world, such as the giving of money for charity. The south wind brings pleasure due for spiritual accomplishments, such as Torah study. The Garden sings how all will be justly rewarded for their unique role in Hashem's world. Then, Hashem and His nation will be united in mutual love. Hashem will call for His people to delight in His garden, and His people will call for Him to delight in them.

It is possible to make the song of the Garden of Eden heard in this world as well. We should channel all of our faculties and all elements of the world towards the service of Hashem. There is nothing created by the Holy G-d that is too unholy to be sanctified. The Jewish People are pleasure-seekers who seek true pleasure — delights of the spirit, not the illusion of transitory physical lust. True pleasure can be found in Hashem's Torah and mitzvahs, and in every waking moment. The more we reveal it, the more we can experience the delight of Garden of Eden, even in this world, and echo its song to the Creator.

- Sources: *Yalkut Shimoni; Pesachim 53b; Shir HaChaim; Perek B'Shir; Li Lishua; Rabbi Noach Weinberg*

**In loving memory of Harav Zeev Shlomo ben Zecharia Leib*

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