



הָרָה רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם, יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁתְּשַׁלַּח מִ
רְפוּאָת הַנֶּפֶשׁ וּרְפוּאָת הַגּוּף לַפְּצוּעֵי הַמִּלְחָמָה, וּלְנִפְגְּעֵי מַעֲשֵׂי טְרוֹר וְאִנְטִישְׁמִיּוֹת
בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וּבְכָל מְקוֹם שֶׁהֵם - עִם שְׂאֵר חוֹלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. אָמֵן.

**May HaShem protect our soldiers; may He send Refu'ah Sh'leima
to the many injured; may He console the bereaved families and all of Israel;
may He facilitate the return of the hostage bodies; may He end this war
with success and peace for Medinat Yisrael and Klal Yisrael wherever we are.**



YERUSHALAYIM in/out times for **CHAYEI SARA**

כ"ד מרחשון ה'תשפ"ו • November 14-15 '25

 **4:05PM**  **3:35PM** •  **5:18PM**  **5:52PM** R' Tam

Use the Z'MANIM link for other locales

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Shabbat M'vorchim

This Shabbat (Parshat Chaye Sara) we bench Rosh Chodesh.

Rosh Chodesh Kislev will be YOM HASHISHI, Friday, November 21st.

לֹאֵשׁ חֹדֶשׁ כִּסְלֹו יִהְיֶה בַּיּוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי
הַבֹּא עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל לְטוֹבָה:

The molad is on Yom Chamishi, 13h 29m 9p.

הַמּוֹלָד יִהְיֶה יוֹם חֲמִישִׁי, שְׁלֹשִׁים וְשִׁמּוֹנָה
דְּקוֹת וְתִשְׁעָה חֲלָקִים אַחֲרֵי אַחַת בְּצִהְרִים.

The molad of Kislev is on Thursday, 29 Marcheshvan (November 20th), 38 minutes and 9 chalakim after 1 in the afternoon. This corresponds to 13:03 Israel Winter Time.

In Rambam notation - ה' יט:תרצג

The actual (astronomical molad, New Moon) is on Thursday, 8:49am.

The Most Interesting Rosh Chodesh of the Calendar

This year, Rosh Chodesh is one day. This is so because Marcheshvan has 29 days.

Marcheshvan is one of two variable months. In our fixed calendar, months are assigned either 29 days or 30 days. Except for Marcheshvan and

Kislev. Marcheshvan is regularly has 29 days, but in a SHALEIM year, it has 30 days.

Kislev regularly has 30 days, but in a CHASEIR year, it has only 29 days.

This year, 5786, is a K'SEDER year - Marcheshvan has 29 days and Kislev has 30.

The result of the variability of Marcheshvan's number of days, Rosh Chodesh Kislev can fall on a large variety of days of the week.

R"Ch Kislev can be:

Sunday, 21.92% of years;
Tuesday, 10.23%; Thursday, 11.51%;
Friday, 11.51%.

One day Rosh Chodesh - 55.17%

Sunday/Monday, 9.97%;
Tuesday/Wednesday, 18.44%;
Thursday/Friday, 16.52%.

Two days Rosh Chodesh - 44.93%

Notice that Rosh Chodesh Kislev can be on any day of the week - except for Shabbat.

We bench Rosh Chodesh Kislev on Shabbat Parshat Chaye Sara 68.11% of years. It is on Shabbat Parshat To-I'dot 31.89% of the time - when R"Ch is Sun or Sun/Mon and To-I'dot-M'vorchim is Machar Chodesh.

No other month has such a varied Rosh Chodesh. That's Kislev - but it is due to the sometimes yes, sometimes no - 30th of Marcheshvan.

CHAYEI SARA

5th of the 54 sedras;
5th of the 12 in B'reishit



Written on 171 lines in a Torah
ranks 37th

4 Parshiyot; 3 open, 1 closed

105 p'sukim - ranks 32nd (11 in
B'reishit)
same as D'varim (which is longer)

1402 words - ranks 37th (11 in
B'reishit)

5314 letters - ranks 36th (11 in
B'reishit)

Chayei Sara has shorter than average
p'sukim in a sedra with slightly below
average number of p'sukim results in
its being a smallish sedra.

MITZVOT

None of the 613 mitzvot are in Chayei
Sara, however, as we mention often,
there are Midot and values and other
lessons to be learned.

One of the 17 mitzva-less sedras, 9 of
which are in B'reishit, 3 in Sh'mot,
none in Vayikra, 2 in Bamidbar, and 3
in D'varim.

Shabbat M'vorchim - or - Not

Here's the story. Shabbat M'vorchim
Kislev is usually on Chayei Sara (as it is
this year). This happens 68.11% of the
time, more than 2/3 of all years. It

happens when Rosh HaShana begins
on Monday, Tuesday, or Shabbat. But,
when RH is Thursday, M'vorchim is on
To-l'dot. And in those 31.89% of years,
it is Machar Chodesh.

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate
start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y
is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the
parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in
the parsha.

Kohen - First Aliya - 16 p'sukim - 23:1-16

[P> 23:1 (20)] The parsha begins by
telling us that Sara died in Kiryat Arba,
which is Hevron. But first it tells us
that she lived a full, long life of 127
years.

SDT: With the last topic of Vayeira
being the AKEIDA, the juxta- position
of Sara's death supports our
Tradition that Sara died as a result of
the Akeida. The Midrash says that the
Satan informed Sara about what
Avraham was intending to do with
Yitzchak, when they went towards
Har HaMoriah. The shock was too
great for an old woman, and she died.

Some commentaries give an inter-
esting twist to this. They say that
Sara died, not from fear that Avraham
would offer Yitzchak as a Korban, but
rather that he might not! She

remembered Avraham's reaction when she told him to banish Yishmael (and Hagar). She was afraid that Avraham's love and kindness towards Yitzchak would prevent him from carrying out G-d's command, and that Avraham would thus fail this ultimate test of faith. When she saw (or heard) that Avraham was returning with Yitzchak still alive, she thought her fears were realized and she died.

Avraham comes (some say from the Akeida, i.e. from Har HaMoriah; some say from Be'er Sheva; either way, it was apparently to Hevron that he came) to eulogize Sara and to cry for her.

Avraham next makes the arrangements for providing a suitable place to bury Sara.

There is a Tradition that Avraham was aware of the burial place of Adam and Chava, and that is the piece of land he was interested in.

He turns to the people of CHEIT, one of whom is known as EFRON. They all exchange niceties and the people offer Avraham to bury Sara anywhere he wants. He insists on buying the place and paying full price - and that is what he does for the field and cave of Machpeila.

PIRKEI AVOT made famous that Avraham was tested 10 times. But the mishna does not enumerate the ten tests. There are different opinions as to which of Avraham's experiences

are considered tests of his faith. Most lists of the 10 end with the Akeida, as implied by the p'sukim themselves. Rabbeinu Yona finds a test after the Akeida - Avraham's experience in providing a burial place for Sara. The question on this is obvious - What was so difficult about that, that it should qualify as a test of faith - especially after the Akeida?

Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that after the Akeida, Avraham still had a couple of difficult things to go through. Wasn't the Akeida and everything that preceded it enough? No, not finished yet. This can test a person, sometimes, more than terrible trials and tribulations, themselves.

There is another approach to answer the same question. Eulogizing his wife, acquiring a burial place, finding a "shiduch" for Yitzchak - even remarrying Hagar (Ketura) are all "regular", mundane experiences. Can one who spoke repeatedly to G-d, ascended Har HaMori'ah, had a special relationship with G-d - can such a person return to being a "normal" human being? This too is a test, and Avraham passed with flying colors.

Levi - Second Aliya -
13 p'sukim - 23:17-24:9

The field, cave, trees, etc. become the lawful property of Avraham, after

which he buries Sara.

B'reishit 24 is the second longest perek in the Torah, with 67 p'sukim. Bamidbar 7 has 89 p'sukim. Bamidbar 26 has 65 p'sukim.

[S> 24:1 (67)] Avraham is now at an advanced age and has been blessed greatly by G-d. "And G-d blessed Avraham BAKOL", with everything.

The word **BAKOL** screams out for explanation. And, sure enough, there are many suggestions as to what this extra blessing of BAKOL is. (Every time we say Birkat HaMazon, we ask G-d to bless us as He blessed our forefathers - BAKOL... Mikol and Kol are terms associated with Yitzchak and Yaakov.)

The numeric value of BAKOL 52, the same as BEN, son. This alludes to the ultimate blessing that Avraham received - his son Yitzchak.

A gimatriya digression:

BEN is 52. So is Eliyahu and Gedaliya. $52 \times 2 = 104$, the gimatriya of Mano'ach and Nachum (anagrams). $52 \times 3 = 156$, the gimatriya of Yosef and Vofsi (anagrams) and Yechezkeil. $52 \times 4 = 208$, gimatriya of Yitzchak, Pinchas, and Hagar. The point? Don't know. It's just interesting.

R. Meir says that Avraham was blessed by NOT having a daughter. In Avraham's time and in his unique circumstances, who would she have married? What would have happened

to her? In this case it was a bracha not to have had a daughter.

On the other hand... R. Yehuda says that Avraham's extra blessing was that he DID have a daughter. There is even an opinion that his daughter's name was BAKOL.

Rabbi Eliezer HaModai says that Avraham was blessed with the art/skill/power of astrology and that he was consulted by noblemen from far and wide.

(Even when G-d told Avraham that he would have a child, Avraham resisted because he had seen in the stars that he was not going to have children. G-d "explained" to Avraham that it is possible to rise above one's "mazal", and in fact, that is the special quality of the nation that will come from him. EIN MAZAL L'YISRAEL. Ibn Ezra says in the name of our Sages z"l, true, but only as long as we keep the Torah.)

R. Shimon bar Yochai says that Avraham had a precious stone with curative powers that would heal all who gazed upon it.

These last two opinions identify BAKOL as Avraham's prominent position in the world. This fits with his role as "father of many nations".

Some suggest that Eisav's not sinning (until Avraham died) and Yishmael's repentance during Avraham's lifetime are the extra blessings.

Other explanations of BAKOL include that Avraham was given a preview of Olam HaBa, the World to Come; that the Angel of Death had no power over Avraham, but rather he died a MITAT N'SHIKA, died with a Divine Kiss; that worms and maggots did not attack his body in the grave.

Regardless of what explanation you like, it is clear that Avraham Avinu was special in G-d's eyes and his life of devotion to G-d and his G'milut Chasadim makes him an exemplary model for us, his descendants.

The one major task remaining, which will forge the next vital link in what promises to be a great people and a great Chain of Tradition, is finding a suitable "shidduch" for Yitzchak. Everything now will depend upon Yitzchak. However great Avraham was, unless there is "solid" continuity, all will be lost. To this end, Avraham calls upon Eliezer to swear that he will faithfully carry out his task, that he will return to Avraham's family and hometown, and find a wife for Yitzchak there. And that Yitzchak is not to leave Eretz Yisrael (having been consecrated on the Mizbei'ach at the Akeida).

Let's take a look at perek 24, its 67 p'sukim that deal with Eliezer being sent to find a suitable wife for Yitzchak. The name Avraham occurs 14 times. Sara's name, twice. Yitzchak's name occurs 8 times;

Rivka's, 13 times. But the shocker is that Eliezer, a major character in this perek, is not named at all. He is referred to as HA-EVED (9 times, and three times as EVED AVRAHAM), the servant - specifically, in reference to his relationship to Avraham and his family. Nine times, he is referred to as HA-ISH, the man. This, in relation to Betu'el, Lavan, and Rivka. Of particular interesting is 24:61 - "And Rivka and her maidens arose and rode on the camels, and they followed THE MAN; and THE SERVANT took Rivka and left." In the same pasuk, Eliezer is called HA-ISH and HA-EVED. At the beginning of the pasuk, Rivka consents to go with Eliezer, the man. Once she actually goes, she becomes part of Avraham's family and Eliezer becomes the servant. And later, Rivka asks the servant about HA-ISH that she sees in the distance. This time, it is Yitzchak that is the man.

Shlishi - Third Aliya - 17 p'sukim - 24:10-26

Eliezer takes ten camels laden with a splendid assortment of goods and travels to Avraham's hometown. Upon arrival, he ties the camels up near the well (and spring), towards evening, at the time when the local girls come to draw water. He asks G-d to be kind to his master Avraham. Eliezer asks for a sign - the girl who will offer him drink and also water for his camels, she will be the one sent by G-d. Almost before

he finished speaking, **Rivka b. Betu'el** of Avraham's family arrives on the scene with her water container on her shoulder. Eliezer runs to her and asks for a bit of water. She immediately gives him his fill and then draws water for his camels (an arduous task). Anxious to find out whether she was "the one", Eliezer waits until the camels have their drink and then presents Rivka with gifts of jewelry. (On the one hand, he has seen her kind nature and tireless act of chesed; on the other hand, he has not even yet asked her who she is.) When Rivka tells Eliezer that she is indeed from Avraham's family and invites him to stay at her home, he prostrates himself before G-d in grateful acknowledgment.

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya - 26 p'sukim - 24:27-52

Eliezer also says a blessing to G-d for not abandoning Avraham or withholding Divine Kindness from him. Rivka runs home to tell her family what has happened. Lavan (filled with ulterior motives, our sources tell us) runs to greet Eliezer. The gold jewelry adorning Rivka catches Lavan's eye, and he "graciously" offers Eliezer hospitality. Eliezer is served food but refuses to eat until his "business" is completed.

Eliezer proceeds to tell the story of his mission. He tells of Avraham and Yitzchak and of being sent to find a wife for Yitzchak. When he asks for

Rivka's hand on behalf of his master, Lavan and Betu'el (commentaries point to Lavan's pushing himself before his father as an indication of a negative personality trait) accept all as G-d's will.

Eliezer again prostrates himself before G-d in grateful acknowledgment of the success of his mission.

Chamishi - 5th Aliya - 15 p'sukim - 24:53-67

Eliezer gives more gifts to Rivka and her mother and brother, then they all celebrate with food and drink, and Eliezer and his party stay overnight. In the morning, Eliezer asks his leave. Rivka's family asks that she remain for a year, or at least ten months (as was the custom in olden times) but Eliezer insists on leaving immediately (and taking Rivka with him). Rivka is consulted and she agrees to leave right away. They send her off with a "maid" (later identified as D'vora) and bless her.

This blessing has been repeated countless times to Jewish brides throughout the generations. Ironical, is it not, that we use Lavan's words for such a special occasion.

Rabbi Sholom Gold z"l speculates as to how a girl growing up in the house of Betuel and Lavan can so quickly step into Sara Imeinu's shoes. His answer (beautifully developed in a shiur) is that it was D'vora, Rivka's

nursemaid, who was her teacher and influence in the ways of Sara. D'vora was left behind when Avraham and Sara "made Aliya", for just this purpose.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya - 11 p'sukim - 25:1-11

[P> 25:1 (11)] Avraham, having successfully provided for the continuity of what will become the Jewish Nation, now lives out the remainder of his life as a "private citizen", so to speak. He takes for himself a wife named KETURA (which we are taught was HAGAR - there are other opinions) and fathers six more children. He gives them gifts, but Yitzchak remains Avraham's exclusive spiritual heir. (We can really say that in some ways, other peoples of the world followed Avraham's lead in living monotheistic lives, but the Torah's definition of Avraham's lineage is Yitzchak.)

Avraham dies at the "ripe old age" of 175 (actually, this is 5 years short of the complete 180 that Yitzchak later reached - various reasons are given for the "lost" 5 years). His was a graceful, good, and fulfilling life (despite the tough times he had). He is buried in the Cave of Machpela, where he had buried Sara. Both Yitzchak and Yishmael take care of the burial.

The Torah implies that Yishmael had repented his ways and had become righteous. What greater "nachas" for a

father than that!

G-d blesses Yitzchak after Avraham's death.

Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya - 7 p'sukim - 25:12-18

[P> 25:12 (7)] The descendants of Yishmael are now enumerated. Yishmael is identified fully as the son of Avraham and Hagar the Egyptian maiden of Sara who bore Yishmael "to Avraham". (This is quite parallel to the description of Yitzchak's connection to Avraham as stated in the beginning of next week's sedra. This might further indicate Yishmael's T'shuva in his later years. On the other hand, commentaries point out that the word TO-L'DOT in the Yishmael context is spelled without any VAVs, indicating a lesser status to Yishmael.) It is noteworthy that Yishmael fathered twelve sons (not like Yitzchak, but like Yaakov would later). Note that both Nachor and Yishmael had their 12 descendants way before we did. This indicates a tougher life for the Jewish people (something that has been borne out over and over again in the course of Jewish History, right up to current events).

Yishmael dies at the age of 100 and 30 and 7 years. The wording in the Torah (seems to) purposely parallels that which was used to describe Sara's lifespan, a further indication (perhaps) of the change for the better in

Yishmael. Rashi says that the age of Yishmael is included to help us compute the chronology of Yaakov.

The last 3 p'sukim are reread for the Maftir.

Haftara - 31 p'sukim - Melachim Alef 1:1-31

The sedra tells of the aging Avraham and his task of providing for the continuity of his beliefs and G-d fearing way-of-life, through his son Yitzchak (even though there were other potential heirs). The Haftara parallels this theme by telling us of the aging King David with many potential heirs, arranging that it would be his son Shlomo who would be the next link in the Davidic line. This, fulfillment of a promise made to Shlomo's mother, Batsheva - similar to the promise made to Sara that her son would inherit. The starting points are Avraham Avinu and David HaMelech. But no matter how strong their personalities were, the chain ends with them unless the next generation is as strong as a Yitzchak Avinu and a Shlomo HaMelech.

From A Candle by Day by Rabbi Shraga Silverstein z"l

Life is a sea to be navigated - not cruised.

We must lead a life which seems just as meaningful when it is reviewed as when it is lived.

Bringing the Prophets to Life

Weekly insights into the Haftara
by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler

Author of Bringing the Prophets to Life (Gefen Publ.)

V'HAMELECH DAVID ZAKEIN - So what?

CHAYEI SARA - 31 p'sukim
- Melachim Alef 1:1-31

This week's haftara is divided into two separate events. The initial p'sukim of this first perek of Melachim Alef are dedicated to the failing physical state of David HaMelech. These four verses describe the King's inability to stay warm - even when being covered by layers of clothes - a reflection of the aging process that had weakened the great military hero of Israel. The text continues in describing the suggestion of David's close attendants to find a young maiden who would tend to the ailing King and keep him warm.

It is a close-up depiction of these final days of the great monarch. But is it necessary, at all?

Consider: The bulk of the story - 27 of the 31 p'sukim in the haftara - is focused upon the attempted coup to overthrow David's rule by his oldest surviving son, Adoniya ben Chagit. The text elaborates on the growing

support behind Adoniyahu that included some of the highest officers and military men of David. Indeed, the opposition to David was so powerful that Adoniyahu gathered his supporters and had them announce Adoniyahu as the new regent - proclaiming: Y'CHI HAMELECH ADONIYAHU, "Long Live King Adoniyahu!" Furthermore, we are also told of the attempts of both the prophet, Natan and David's wife, Bat Sheva (mother of future King-Shlomo), to convince David HaMelech to take the necessary steps requires to put down this mini-rebellion.

Given the weight and impact of these events that fill the bulk of the haftara reading, we might rightfully wonder why these first verses telling of David's "chilly" final days were so important as to be included at all!

Most of us, I'm sure, do realize that the very attempt to remove the King from his throne was fed by his obvious weakness. Would this son have dared to raise any challenge to the powerful and well-liked monarch? Would he have succeeded in gathering a large - even massive - group of leaders and influencers to unseat the sitting regent? Certainty not! But the deteriorating physical state of David, combined by the loss of his awareness of what was happening outside of the royal palace (recall that both Natan and Bat Sheva had to inform

David of the rebellion) were the encouragement needed for the power-hungry "king-in-waiting" to open his attempt to usurp the throne.

But what we might not realize is that these events impacted the very future of David's successor, Shlomo. The text continues (beyond the haftara's conclusion) to tell of the collapse of the rebellion, with Adoniyahu and his supporters, submitting to the new King, Shlomo. Indeed, Adoniyahu pleads for his life with his brother and was given a reprieve on the condition never to challenge the throne again. HOWEVER, soon after David's death, Adoniyahu approaches the newly crowned king with a request to take the hand of Avishag, the beautiful attendant of David (of whom we read in the beginning of the haftara), in marriage. It was an innocent request - but not in the eyes of the wisest of kings. Shlomo understood that Adoniyahu's wish was but a way to overthrow the throne. Avishag, though never the wife of David (as clearly mentioned in the text), was seen by many as David's wife, having spent his last days with her alone. Marrying the wife of the former King was a clear statement that he was in line for Kingship. Adoniyahu's request was, in effect, his second attempt to claim the throne as "rightful" successor, being the oldest son of the deceased Monarch.

**HAFOCH BAH, V'HAFOCH BAH -
D'CHOLA VAH - keep reviewing and
studying our Torah - for all can be
found in it! ★**

Eliezer gave to Rivka • the chumus & salad plate that was served to Eliezer, which he refused to eat until his 'business' was done. Good thing he waited because it was poison (which it is now labeled) • CHUPA × 2 is for Yitzchak's marriage to Rivka and Avraham's to Ketura • Gift for Rivka and her family, as well as the gifts Avraham gave to the children of Ketura - and play-on-words, gift is a MINCHA, the davening of which is attributed to Yitzchak, end of the sedra • The word TEREM appears eight times in the Torah, twice in Chayei Sara. That's the logo of Terem • There is the logo of MASA, an Israeli non-profit organization that enables thousands of Jewish youth to spend a semester or a year in Israel in any of over 160 programs, helping them build a life-long relationship with Israel and a firm commitment to Jewish life. MASA is also one of the sons of Yishmael. Different spelling, but very close in sound • A son of Yishmael was KEIDAR, spelled the same and sounding similar to KADAR, which is a potter - as in Harry Potter • The logo of Chevron gas company is for Chevron, if you pronounce the CH as in CHANUKA • There are two dots forming a SH'VA - this is a sound-alike for a grandson of Avraham's via Ketura • The bison is called a M'RI in modern Hebrew. It's mentioned in the haftara, but it probably referred to a different

animal. Likely that the haftara is referring to a different member of the bovine family or a description of a bull or cow • The question-marked chair is from the haftara - who will sit on David's throne after his death? • The badge is Agent 99's of Control. She was a SOCHENET, a term describing Avishag in the haftara • Charlie the tuna - he stands for Y'TUR NAFISH whose name sounds like "your tuna fish" • Water with an eye is EIN HAMAYIM • Lauren Bacall = BAKOL. She was named the 20th greatest female star of classic Hollywood cinema. She was born Betty Joan Perske to Jewish parents. Related to Shimon Peres. Married out twice. She died at age 90 in 2014 • Sandy Kofax, a great-great-great-great-...grandson of Rivka Imeinu, was a baseball pitcher, as in the pitcher she carried on her shoulder, from which she gave a drink to Eliezer, and with which she repeatedly filled the trough to water the camels • 4 baseball bats, 1 cricket bat, and two bats (the only true flying mammals). All together we get BAT-SHEVA, from the haftara • 10 GIMALIM on the AYIN (see 24:30) • color markers are called TUSHIM in Hebrew. With the L' we get L'TUSHIM - descendants of Avraham via K'tura • tennis great, Arthur Ashe, for EIFER in Avraham's humble self-description and the name of one another of Avraham's offspring from K'tura •

Kedem and KEIDMA, from the place to which the Yishmael clan migrated • Zodiac wheel is for the opinion that BAKOL means that Avraham was a well-known astrologer who was sought out by many kings and noblemen • the cave with multiplication equations is for M'ARAT HAMACHPEILA • the baby is in MID-YAWN (oldie but goodie) - one of Avraham's sons from Ketura • B or D lying down is a famous mnemonic device for remembering the names of the two types of camels - the D on its back resembles the single hump of the dromedary camel and the B on its back is for the two-humped camel, the Bactrian. (Bonus fact: 90% of the world's camels are one-humped.) • Lavan said P-KNEE-T HABAYIT, I have cleaned up the house and there is room for Eliezer and his camels • the circle of water is the logo of the company NEVIOT - close sound-alike to NEVAYOT, Yishmael's eldest son • if you say A4 with a Brooklyn (or Boston) accent, it sounds like EIFA, one of Midyan's sons • Betty WHITE is for Lavan • Rabbi Chanoch Yeres (PhiloTorah columnist - among other things he does) is for CHANOCH, one of Avraham's grandsons from Ketura. Bonus fact: Chanoch is the name of more different people than any other name in the Torah - this Chanoch is spelled without a VAV. These others, with: Son of Kayin, son of Yered and father of Metushelach, son of

Reuven. That's four different people in Torah with the same name. • The five HEIs are for the ones missing from the word NAARA • Avshalom Kor and Natan Sharansky are for two people mentioned in the haftara • $n \times 10$ to the 7th is for Lavan's blessing to Rivka that she should be the mother of ALFEI R'VAVA, thousands of myriads. $1000 \times 10,000 = 10,000,000$ which is 10 to the 7th power. Multiply it by n (any number) because ALFEI is in the plural • there are two logos, one of a place and one of an organization - yours to figure out • symbol for towards the east and a bottle of Kedem grape juice - for KEIDMA EL ERETZ KEDEM, the direction that Avraham sent his children from Ketura • Megila is for the other 127 • and 2 Unexplaineds

לע"נ
הרב יעקב צבי ב"ר דוד אריה ז"ל
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l

Hopes and Fears

CHAYEI SARA

The sedra of Chayei Sara focuses on two episodes, both narrated at length and in intricate detail. Avraham buys a field with a cave as a burial place for Sara, and he instructs his servant to find a wife for his son Yitzchak. 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.

Avraham, 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 God, that the land to which he has travelled - Canaan - will one day be his:

(1) Then the Lord appeared to Avram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." There he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him (12:7).

(2) After Lot had separated from him, the Lord said to Avram, "Raise your eyes and look around from where you are to the north, south, east, and west. All the land you see I will give to you and your descendants forever... Get up and walk through the length and breadth of the land, for to you shall I give it." (13:14-17)

(3) And He told him, "I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur Kasdim

to give you this land to possess it." (15:7)

(4) On that day the Lord made a covenant with Avram: "To your descendants I will give this land, from the River of Egypt to the great river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Refa'im, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites." (15:18-21)

(5) "I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout the generations: an eternal covenant. I will be God to you and your descendants after you, and I will give you and your descendants after you the land where you now live as strangers, the whole land of Canaan, an everlasting possession, and I will be their God." (17:7-8)

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

(1) "I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great. You will become a blessing." (12:2)

(2) "I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth: if anyone could count the dust of the earth, only then could your offspring could be counted." (13:16)

(3) He took him outside and said,

"Look at the heavens and count the stars - if indeed you can count them." He said to him, "that is how your descendants will be." (15:5)

(4) "And God said to him, "As for Me - this is My covenant with you: you shall be father to a multitude of nations. No longer shall you be called Avram. Your name will be Avraham, for I have made you father to a multitude of nations. (17:4-5)

(5) "I will bless you greatly and make your descendants as many as the stars of the heavens, as the sand on the seashore." (22:17)

These are remarkable promises. The land in its length and breadth will be Avraham's and his children's as "an everlasting possession." Avraham 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 Sara dies? Avraham owns no land and has only one son. (He had another, Yishmael, but was told that he would not be the bearer of the covenant.)

The significance of the two episodes is now clear. First, Avraham 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 God in our midst. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs." Efron, the owner of the field Avraham 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 facade for some extremely hard bargaining. Avraham 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." Avraham is not deterred. He insists that he wants to buy his own. Efron'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, Avraham owns the land. The final transfer of ownership is recorded in precise legal prose (23:17-20) to signal that, at last, Avraham owns part of the land. It is a small part: one field and a cave. A burial place, bought at great expense. That is the entirety of the Divine promise of the land that Avraham will see in his lifetime.

The next chapter, one of the longest in the Mosaic books (second longest

perek in the Chumash - 67 p'sukim), tells of Avraham's concern that Yitzchak should have a wife. He is - we must assume - at least 37 years old (his age at Sara's death) and still unmarried. Avraham 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 Avraham's family, immediately finds the girl, Rivka, before he has even finished praying for God'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]." Lavan, Rivka's brother, plays a role not unlike that of Efron: the show of generosity conceals a tough, even exploitative, determination to make a profitable deal. Eventually patience pays off. Rivka leaves. Yitzchak marries her. The covenant will continue.

These are, then, no minor episodes. They tell a difficult story. Yes, Avraham 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 God will act. It is in fact a request, an invitation, from God to Avraham and his children that they should act. God will help them. The outcome will be what God said it would. But not without total commitment from Avraham'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. Avraham'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 God. That idea has no place in the imaginative world of the first book of the Torah. To the contrary: the covenant is God's challenge to us, not ours to God. The meaning of the events of Chayei Sara is that Avraham realised that God 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.

Around the Shabbat Table:

- (1) "Divine promises are not guarantees; they are challenges." What does this message mean to you?
- (2) Why do you think struggle is such an important part of faith?
- (3) Where else in Tanach are the characters tested in their faith and commitment to God? What about in later Jewish history?

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

Message from the Haftara

*Rabbi Katriel (Kenneth) Brander
President and Rosh HalYeshiva
Ohr Torah Stone Institutions*

Leadership and Family

CHAYEI SARA

This week, thousands of Jews will spend Shabbat at the burial place of Sarah Imeinu and Avraham Avinu as we read the parsha that narrates their deaths and foreshadows the legacy they leave. This custom is unique, as far as drawing large numbers of people to a biblical burial place at a certain time, year after year. It illustrates how Avraham and

Sarah are still embraced as our national parents. This concept is spiritually powerful, and also contains important lessons about family, especially the way that leaders balance their communal roles with the roles and responsibilities they have in their own families.

This balance, a perennial challenge faced by community leaders throughout the ages, is what we today may call "work-life balance". The many pressing needs of the community often compete with the needs of the leader's own family – a spouse and children, who look to their partner or parent for love, care, and attention. It is true that a life of leadership can offer wonderful opportunities for one's family not available to others. In such families, children often witness firsthand a rich and multifaceted Jewish experience, as they live within a home engaged in community needs, that takes stands on important issues, and is involved in education and chesed.

Yet this very life of purpose can sometimes come at a cost. The demands of public service can strain devotion to one's own family – a tension faced by three of the most important figures in Jewish history: Avraham Avinu (our patriarch), Moshe Rabbeinu (our teacher), and David HaMelech (the king). Each of them responded to the challenge in a

different way, allowing us to study and learn the consequences of their different strategies.

Let us begin with who is often seen as the prime example of total devotion to the Jewish people, even at the expense of family - Moshe Rabbeinu. The Midrash (Sifrei Bamidbar 99) informs us that to remain constantly in a state of readiness for prophecy, Moshe separated himself completely from his wife Tzipora. Although we are told the names of Moshe's two sons, the Torah records not a single interaction between him and them after the Exodus. In the Jewish tradition, the consequences are clear: According to one midrash (Bamidbar Rabba 21:14), Moshe's sons distanced themselves from Torah study, and another (Mechilta d'Rabi Yishmael, Masechta d'Amalek 1) suggests that one even turned to idolatry. Apart from an ignominious part that they played in the story of Micha's idol (see Sho-f'tim 18:30 and Rashi ad loc.), their descendants would recede into obscurity, not playing any major role in subsequent books of Tanach.

Significantly, after Moshe dies at the close of the Torah, we are told: "No one knows his burial place" (34:6). This is because a person's gravesite is primarily meant to be a place for his or her own descendants to honor their ancestor's memory. But since Moshe's connection with his children

was severed, the place of his burial was never preserved. Perhaps it was Moshe's great responsibilities and dedication to the Jewish people that caused this chasm. However, as students of Moshe Rabbeinu, we need to learn from all sides of his personality: from his amazing virtues, such as his leadership, his dedication, and extreme selflessness, but also from the important things he sacrificed along the way that we might want to work to preserve ourselves.

In contrast to Moshe, our parsha presents the Jewish people's first patriarch, Avraham Avinu, as a model of balance. Avraham was famously renowned for his hospitality and devoted considerable resources to outreach and moral leadership. But in our parsha, he shows no less zealous attention to those closest to him, mourning and tending to Sara's burial, making sure that Yitzchak finds a proper wife, and proactively providing for his other children (B'reishit 25:6). It therefore comes as no surprise that Avraham's burial place - Maarat HaMachpela - is extremely well known and visited constantly by thousands of people of numerous faiths, most of whom count themselves among his descendants.

In our haftara, we are given a third model: King David. A visionary and

passionate monarch, David wrote and compiled the book of Psalms, founded Israel's first ruling dynasty, and paved the way for the building of the Beit HaMikdash. Yet when it came to his family, David often found himself caught off-guard. A rebellion initiated by his charismatic son Avshalom temporarily succeeded in toppling his reign (Sh'muel Bet 15). And in our haftara, an aging David is initially unaware while his son Adoniya attempts a similar coup.

David, while not fully withdrawn like Moshe, tends to his family's needs in a reactive, rather than a proactive, way. He does not devote independent energy to engaging with his children and ensuring their futures like Avraham has done. Fittingly then, David's burial spot lies somewhere between the two extremes. While a modest site, known as "David's Tomb", exists outside the Old City of Jerusalem, it serves as a site of pilgrimage and visitation to only a few, and its authenticity is disputed by many, including important Jewish religious authorities.

A comparison of the three figures of Moshe, Avraham, and David thus teaches a valuable lesson. The endurance of the legacy we leave – symbolized in this case by our burial sites – is proportional to the time and energy we devote not only to our communities, but to our families. We

must make space for the continuity of the values most precious to us through the people most precious to us – our spouses, children, and grandchildren – because it is through them that those values live on. Our prioritizing family is not, heaven forbid, an act of selfishness. On the contrary, by demonstrating the importance of this most basic building block of Jewish continuity, we can exemplify to the community at large what God desires from each and every one of us. In doing so, we will guarantee not only our own personal future, but that of our nation as a whole. 🌍



PhiloTorah D'var Torah

TAMIM TIHYEH

Be wholehearted with HaShem. This is one of the translations of TAMIM TIHYEH IM HASHEM ELOKECHA – the summary statement/command in Parshat Sho-f'tim in the portion that teaches us what and on whom we should rely – G-d, Torah, the Navi, Sanhedrin – and on what and whom we may not rely – divination, astrologers, omens, sorcery, conjuring, necromancy... and other occult arts.

Before we continue, let's put all this

in perspective of Parshat Chayei Sara. The gemara says, and the Rambam echoes, that Eliezer was guilty of relying on omens. When he found himself at the well/spring in Avraham's hometown, he was uncertain as to how to go about finding a suitable wife for his master's son, Yitzchak. He turned to G-d (that's good) and announced that the girl who would offer him a drink and also offer to water his camels would be the one. It is debated by commentaries as to whether this is really relying on a sign or an omen, or did this constitute a reasonable test of suitability as a shidduch for Yitzchak. The gemara takes what we might call a middle position on this question by stating that Eliezer was one of three people in Tanach who did not ask properly, with two of them (Eliezer and King Shaul) being answered by G-d well, in spite of the problematic way the request was posed, and one was not answered well (Yiftach). Eliezer is faulted because it could have been an inappropriate girl who made the right offers, but it was Rivka Imeinu who actually did - obviously, the right girl. But the point is, Eliezer's "sign" was flawed. This is still a far cry from Omens (according to most sources), which is akin to Avoda Zara, idolatry.

Let's focus on the topic of omens and then transit to a sub-topic of NICHUSH - astrology.

It is clearly forbidden according to Jewish Law to act upon an omen, a sign that has nothing to do with the action one will or will not take.

If one says, "Because a crow flew overhead, I will not do such-and-such today." "Because my piece of bread fell from my mouth, then I won't do something I planned to do during the day." These are forbidden. And all similar things.

How about what Eliezer did? He gave a sign, but - it could be argued - it wasn't an unrelated kind of sign. Commentaries debate that issue.

Side point: When the Torah tells about the episode at the well, it says that he gave Rivka the jewelry before he asked her who she was, and before he found out that she was from Avraham's family. When he recounts the episode to Rivka's family, he tells them that he asked her about her family and then gave her the jewelry. It seems as though he realized his "mistake" and was covering up for it when telling the family. On the other hand, there are opinions that he did things originally as he told the family. Exactly how this fits with the p'sukim is difficult to work out.

And now, what about Astrology. If a person is told by an astrologer or by his horoscope that a particular day is not good for business transactions, or something like that - may the

person postpone his scheduled deal?

The acting upon a sign in the stars (as this would be) is one of the things forbidden by the Torah.

Is there "anything" to astrology? Do the stars and constellations have anything to say to people about what will or will not happen?

The Rambam school of thought seems to be that there is no truth in the readings of the stars, and that is why it is forbidden to us. As nonsense, all it would do is divert us from our proper straightforward relationship with G-d.

Many others feel that Astrology is real. That G-d does indicate with the heavenly bodies the fate and destiny of people. But to rely on that would be to deny that Torah Jews are not bound by what is predicted for them. To deny that we can rise above our mazal (as the expression goes). And to act upon a horoscope would be to deny G-d's ability to run the world as He sees fit. It would deny our ability to take our destiny into our own hands. And that would damage our relationship with G-d.

Either way, we have a TAMIM TIHYEH problem.

Anything in astrology we can accept?

Perhaps the indicators of personality traits. Then we are on our own to channel them positively.

Remember too that Avraham Avinu was a well-known astrologer and that there is an opinion that "And G-d blessed Avraham BAKOL - with everything" refers to his ability as an astrologer. He was skeptical when HaShem told him that he would have a son, because he saw in the stars that he would not. That's when HaShem told him about the ability to rise above one's mazal.

EIN MAZAL L'YISRAEL (Gemara, Shabbat & Nedarim)

We must avoid all that might distance us from G-d. **PTDT**

Trial & Error



The process of experimenting with various methods of doing something until one finds the most successful.

And in Hebrew?

נִסְיָה וְטַעֲמָה

Without NIKUD:

נסייה וטעייה



Kindness & Truth

Avraham's servant is the major player in the central drama of this week's Torah reading, namely the mission to find a wife for Yitzchak. Besides actually finding Rivka, he is the first person to ever say BARUCH HASHEM!, and he seems to also invent the phrase CHESED V'EMET, which he uses twice (B'reishit 24:27,49). What's mind boggling to me is the fact that we don't even know his name! I know Rashi and the world at large assume that it's Avraham's faithful factotum Eliezer, but God through Moshe Rabbeinu's Torah doesn't so inform us.

The plaudits for this anonymous hero are vast. The Midrash tells us that, 'The conversation of the servants of the Patriarchs' household are more significant than the Torah laws of the descendants' (B'reishit Raba 60:8). The descendants referred to are CHAZAL, our Sages from the Talmud! This assumption is based on the amazing length of this narrative, 67 verses, the longest chapter in B'reishit and second longest in Chumash, over two columns in a written Torah.

But my focus in this piece is on the phrase CHESED V'EMET, which I translated in my title as 'kindness and truth'. JPS goes with 'true kindness', Rav Aryeh Kaplan 'kind and right' and Prof Alter 'steadfast kindness'. I prefer Rav Kaplan's approach that these are two separate nouns identifying two ideas for reasons which will become apparent in a few paragraphs.

Ya'akov Avinu reused this phraseology towards the end of his life in conversation with his beloved Yosef: And the time drew nigh that Yisrael must die: and he called his son Yosef, and said to him, If now I have found grace in thy sight (in real English that would be: If you really love me!), put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly (CHESED V'EMET) with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt (47:29).

It is this conversation which gives us the most common usage of the phrase: CHESED SHEL EMET. This means the great kindness shown to the deceased, and refers to the reality that participating in a burial is a kindness which cannot be returned; hence SHEL EMET, true kindness without expectation of reimbursement.

In our story, when we look closely at what the 'servant' had in mind, I think that Rav Hirsch explains our phrase

correctly: 'Deal kindly' to nullify your desires and agree to send your daughter to a faraway land, and 'truly' to keep your word that Yitzchak will never come back to Charan where his father was told LECH L'CHA.

However, over the centuries our rabbis have suggested many beautiful ways to interpret this phrase. The Meor V'Shemesh sees the statement as making sure no descendant of Canaan would ever marry into our gene pool, because Canaan made his offspring swear to never adhere to truth (Pesachim 113b). I wonder how one can trust an oath to never tell the truth.

The S'fat Emet avers that our 'servant' was really explaining that CHESED and EMET only exist in the world because of the AVOT. They discovered, displayed and disseminated these traits to the rest of mankind.

From the idea that our 'servant' is explaining the very concept of CHESED and EMET, it is a very short jump to the most famous verse where these terms and concepts appear: Give EMET to Ya'akov and CHESED to Avraham, as You promised an oath to our fathers in days gone by (Micha 7:20). That verse, of course, appears in the daily U'VA L'TZIYON prayer, but is also the last verse in our annual TASHLICH ceremony, and is the last verse in the book of Micha.

Rav Soloveitchik wants to know why Yitzchak and his character trait, GEVURA (strength of character) do not appear in our very famous verse. Doesn't seem fair. But the Rav explains it makes perfect sense. Because GEVURA involves retreat, an act of withdrawal. So, 'Yitzchak is absent, consistent with the very theme of withdrawal which he personifies'. Staying in character, he remained at home.

The Vilna Gaon explains that the whole scenario is consistent with the intent of the character traits. CHESED involves voluntary acts of kindness and largess. It encompasses the promises given to Avraham (I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you shall be a blessing [B'reishit 12:3]; To your offspring I assign this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates [15:18]; As for Me, this is My covenant with you: You shall be the father of a multitude of nations [17:4]).

On the other hand, Ya'akov was to represent EMET which entails the fulfillment of the promises. He has the large family and goes down to Egypt where the adventures of the promises begin to unfold.

But for me it was Rav Yissachar Frand who really clarified the distinction between these two character traits.

He says that in Rav Nissan Alpert's eulogy for his beloved Rebbe (and surrogate father) Reb Moshe Feinstein, he pointed out that Reb Moshe almost always gave recommendations for any person or cause which approached him for support. Why didn't Reb Moshe look carefully into these issues (as he did in his Halachic decisions)?

Rav Alpert explained that CHESED and EMET are not really compatible. One is based in the brain and the other in the heart. Rav Frand expanded:

In a sense, truth is the antagonist of kindness. If we would do a thorough investigation of poor people that ask for charity, we would probably reject most of them. Indeed, when CHESED and EMET are mentioned together in the Torah, the word CHESED always precedes the word EMET. CHESED is quick and instinctive. EMET is deliberate and thorough. If CHESED would wait for EMET, it would never get off the ground. A person's first reaction must be kindness.

Avraham, the Master of CHESED, had to be the first Patriarch. EMET is critical to our long term survival, but can arrive a bit later. When approached for help, lead with your heart. Maybe the title of this piece should be: Kindness THEN Truth. 🙏

Rav Kook Torah



by Rabbi Chanan Morrison
www.ravkooktorah.com

Guarding the Inner Child

The Torah counts the years of Sara's long life: "A hundred years and twenty years and seven years; these were the years of Sara's life" (B'reishit 23:1). Noting the verse's wordiness, the Sages commented that throughout all the years of her life – whether at age seven, twenty, or a hundred – Sara retained the same goodness, the same purity, and the same youthful innocence.

Despite her long years of barrenness, despite twice being kidnapped as she accompanied her husband Avraham on his many journeys, Sara did not become hard and cynical. Their son was named Yitzchak, "he will laugh" – due to Avraham's feelings of wonderment and Sara's amazed laughter. "God had given me laughter; all who hear will rejoice for me" (21:6).

How to Educate

From the inspiring example of Sara's purity and faith, we can learn an important lesson about education.

The nation's future depends upon how we educate the next generation. How should we tend to the vineyard

of the House of Israel so that the saplings will prosper and grow, anchoring fast roots below and producing pleasant fruit above? How can we make sure that our children will develop into complete Jewish adults, their values firmly rooted in their heritage, living lives that are “pleasing to God and to man”?

We must take care to avoid slavish imitation of the educational methods of other nations. Our educational approach must suit the special nature and unique characteristics of our nation.

Two Views of Childhood

The question of education revolves around an even more basic question. What is childhood? Is it just a preparatory stage leading to adulthood, or does it have intrinsic value in and of itself?

If life is all about working and earning a livelihood, then a child is simply a lump of clay to be formed into a tool to serve in the nation’s workforce. Childhood is but a preparation for adulthood, when one becomes a productive member of society, a cog in the great machine of the nation’s economy.

But there is another view of life, an idealistic outlook which values the qualities of purity and innocence. Such a viewpoint sees childhood as a stage of life that has value in its own

right. The Sages recognized the special contribution of children to the world. “The world endures only for the sake of the breath of school children”, for their Torah is learned in purity, undefiled by sin (Shabbat 119b).

When children are educated properly, we may discern within their pristine souls untold measures of holiness and purity. But this is only true if the grace and beauty of these delicate flowers is not crushed by the spirit-numbing reality of the factory floor and the cynical manipulations of greedy corporations.

Childhood is good and holy, but it is too weak and vulnerable to withstand the powerful forces of society. It is our duty to preserve the simplicity of childhood, to carefully allow our children to mature without losing their innate innocence. This will enable them to acquire the physical strength and spiritual resilience that they lack, while retaining the innocent exuberance of childhood.

My Anointed Ones

“Do not harm M'SHICHAH, My anointed ones – this refers to school children” (Shabbat 119b). Why are children called “God’s anointed ones”? Anointing is not a one-time event, but an initiation ceremony which influences the years to come. Thus a king is anointed, and through-

out the years of his reign he is the MELECH HA-MASHIACH, the anointed king.

The same is true with childhood. When it has not been debased by the pressures of an exploitative society, childhood is our anointing, our initiation, so that we may enjoy its pure fruits throughout our lives.

This is the beautiful example that Sara provides. She lived a life of holiness and pure faith, retaining her childlike wonder and purity throughout the many vicissitudes of her long life. “All her years were equal in goodness” (Rashi).

*Sapphire from the Land of Israel.
Adapted from Ma'amerei HaRe'iyah
vol. II, pp. 230-231, from a lecture that
Rav Kook delivered at the opening of a
Talmud Torah school in Rehovot in 1905*

Parsha Story

Stories and Parables from
the famed Maggid of Dubno
by Rabbi Chanan Morrison

The Dancing Duo

SHABBAT

Simcha on Shabbat & Yom Tov

Hershel lost the use of his legs as a boy. It wasn't easy, not walking, not running, not even wandering where

he pleased. But he managed. Hershel was the sort who managed. And he had Zalman.

Zalman was strong as an ox and, not incidentally, built like one. He could hoist a barrel with one hand. Only trouble was, he was deaf as a stone.

One afternoon, Hershel had an idea. Alone, they were stuck. Together, they could move mountains, or at least get across town. Zalman would carry Hershel on his shoulders, and Hershel would be his eyes and ears. A perfect partnership.

The plan worked brilliantly – most of the time.

One evening, strolling through town, they passed a house filled with music, laughter, and stomping feet. Hershel caught it at once: the fiddle, the singing. Zalman, of course, heard nothing. He saw only a house. He shifted his shoulders, ready to move on.

Hershel, thinking fast, reached into his pocket and pulled out a slim flask of gin. He poured a small cup and handed it to Zalman. Zalman drank. Encouraged by his friend's good spirits, so to speak, Hershel poured another. And another.

Before long, Zalman, now pleasantly tipsy, began to sway. Then he started to dance. Soon he was spinning and twirling, a one-man celebration, with

Hershel perched on his shoulders, bouncing along to the rhythm.

And so, thanks to a little well-placed encouragement, they had the time of their lives. One heard the music. The other felt the gin. Each, in his own way, danced with all his heart.

Celebration of Body and Soul

The Torah commands us to rejoice on the three festivals of the year. Fine. But how exactly?

The Sages answered: good food, nice clothes, a cup or two of wine. Not exactly what you'd expect for spiritual uplift, but there it is. Also Shabbat, Yishayahu tells us, should be celebrated as "a delight" (58:13).

But shouldn't holy days be about higher things – prayer, Torah, spiritual meditations? Why all the emphasis on brisket and Bordeaux?

Because our soul and body are like Hershel and Zalman. The soul hears the music of Shabbat and Yom Tov. It feels the holiness in the air. The body, however, is deaf to all that. It needs something it can hold in the hand, smell in the glass, taste on the tongue.

And so, just as Hershel did for his deaf friend, we give the body something to celebrate. A fine meal, a glass of wine, the joy of nice clothing. And in return, the body lifts the soul on its shoulders. The body rejoices,

the soul soars, and together, each in its own way, they dance.

*The Wit and Wisdom of the Dubno Maggid.
Adapted from The Maggid and his Parables,
pp. 41-42*

The Daily Portion - Sivan Rahav Meir

Learning from Hadar Goldin's words

Translated by Janine Muller Sherr

The funeral for Lieutenant Hadar Goldin HY"D took place this week in Israel.

For eleven years, our enemies wanted to desecrate his memory; now we will honor him by sharing his words of wisdom. When Hadar was just nineteen years old, he began to study the classic text, Mesilat Yesharim (The Path of the Righteous), a step-by-step guide to spiritual and ethical perfection, composed by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzatto.

Hadar had listened to classes given by Rav Eliezer Kashtiel from Mechinat Eli on Mesilat Yesharim and wrote notes for himself that were subsequently published in a remarkable book.

At the beginning of Mesilat Yesharim, Rabbi Luzatto writes: "Man was created solely to delight in God."

What do these words mean?

In his notes, Hadar defined for himself the meaning of true delight:

"A person feels delight when his experiences align perfectly with his soul, but when his experiences do not align with his soul, he does not feel pleasure. In the course of our daily lives, we focus primarily on the outside world and feel the impact of our surroundings, but we seldom glimpse into our own soul. The outside world obscures a person's soul, his personality, and his very essence.

If I choose to pursue fleeting pleasures and passing thrills, I miss the opportunity to discover the source of continuous joy: my own soul. It is imperative that a person discover his own self and reveal the essence of his soul."

May we merit to discover this source of true delight and to raise ourselves up by following in the path of the righteous.

May Hadar Goldin's memory be a blessing.

To receive Sivan Rahav-Meir's daily
WhatsApp: tiny.cc/DailyPortion



by Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple z"l

A Time to Weep

Avraham came to mourn for Sara and to weep for her (B'reishit 23:2).

The patriarch's heart was torn, and he gave way to weeping.

There is a lot of weeping in the Bible. There is a time to weep, says Kohelet (3:4).

Cruden's Concordance, first published in 1737, says, "The ancient Hebrews wept, and made their trouble to appear openly, in mourning and affliction. They were not of the opinion that courage and greatness of soul consisted in seeming to be insensible in adversity, or in restraining their tears. It was even looked upon as a great disrespect for any one not to be bewailed at his funeral..."

Yet go back to Kohelet. There is a time to weep, so there must be a time not to weep. There are Biblical verses which actually command people not to weep.

Many a time Israel is asked, "Why are you weeping?" Rachel, the embodiment of Jewish motherhood, is told, "Hold back your voice from weeping" (Yirmiyahu 31:15).

It is natural to weep at tragedy, but there are times to move on from weeping.

Weeping isn't enough when there are things that can be done to ameliorate a situation. When there is an injustice, one should not just cry, but cry out and try to support the victim.

When someone has died, sympathy requires not mere weeping but practical help for the family. When one is in distress, one may start with a good cry but should then quietly ask, "Is there a way out of the problem?"

Even a Rachel who is weeping for her children can be urged towards faith and hope.

Yes, my Lord

When dealing with the Hittites concerning the purchase of Machpelah, Avraham is called by them "My lord", ADONI (23:6,11,15 et al).

He, on the other hand, does not call Efron or any Hittite "My lord".

It cannot be that the patriarch lacks good manners. As far as he is concerned, there is only one "Lord" - the Almighty.

He (Avraham) is, in fact, the first human being to call God "Lord"; the

Hebrew may come from a root that means firm, strong or powerful, and some dictionaries even link it with DIN - law.

Whatever title ("prince", etc.) he uses for human beings, it must not compete with the name which indicates God's Lordship.

There are militant anti-masculinists today who will go to any lengths in order not to use the term "Lord" for God, because "Lord" is a masculine term and they are determined to de-genderise the Bible and prayer book... and God too.

The fact is that when we use traditional terminology we know exactly what we are doing. We do not call HaShem by a masculine name in order to claim that the Creator is a male as against a female; we are using a classical text which is written in classical language.

We recognise that some writers refer to a feminine side of God, but when the militant modernists think this entitles them to speak of the Deity as "She" they are only confusing the issue. -OZ

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

Sedra Highlight

- Dr Jacob Solomon

CHAYEI SARA

'I am a stranger, and a citizen... let me have a piece of land for burial purposes' (23:4).

This week's parasha opens with the first of the three tasks that were to confront Avraham Avinu in his old age. The three tasks were:

(a) To bury Sara and thereby acquire a piece of Eretz Yisrael in his own right.

(b) To find a wife for Yitzchak, his aging son, so that his work would continue to the third and further generations.

(c) To produce more children, so that they may also carry his life's work forward.

None of them were easy. All were fraught with tension and tough negotiation. Not all were successful. Yet all were part of the makings of Avraham Avinu and his work, in striving to bring civilization to humanity and ultimately to Am Yisrael.

In the first task, S'forno explains 'a stranger and a citizen' as Avraham Avinu qualifying himself as eligible to buy land. Remember that Avraham made his living as a pastoral nomad, always outside the walls of the city states that made up the Land of

Canaan. He was an outsider, a man of no fixed address in the region. Only urban residents of Hebron were permitted to purchase real estate in the locality. Thus Avraham declared that although he was currently a GER - a stranger, he would in the future change his status to a TOSHAV - a resident. He did not elaborate that several centuries would pass before his descendants would do that on his behalf.

So we may translate the words T'NU LI ACHUAZAT KEVER as 'allow me to buy a piece of land for burial' (c.f. 31:7). That was more than a mere request. It can be argued that Avraham was not just seeking to buy a plot to bury Sara, but that he wanted to use the occasion to start a process that his descendants would take to completion. That was to take possession of the Land that G-d promised him.

As in the following context. His previous experiences with G-d indicated that He does not shower gifts from the heavens, but that He requires great HISHTADLUT: human effort, with which He will eventually interact and grant success. As in trying to settle down to his job in making a living as a pastoral nomad, only to be frustrated with famine and having to quit the area; and yet he returned loaded with the wealth of Egypt. As in his quest for a son worthy of promoting his life's work for

development by the next generation: a long, and at times, despairing wait following the prospect of future destiny coming to an abrupt end as a human sacrifice. Avraham Avinu discovered that not all was what it seemed at the time, and not all was to work out quite in the way he envisioned. Far from the experience terminating Yitzchak life for an unknown higher purpose, the Akeida was to raise Yitzchak as well as Avraham to yet higher spiritual positions to effect the destiny that they were created for. To live and promote a way of life through which ultimately the whole of humanity would be blessed by G-d, and to do it from the base of their possession of Eretz Yisrael. But all required HISHTADLUT - human effort - and involvement in unavoidable and extremely trying situations.

Similarly here, in his old age. His objective was not just to bury Sara, but to get the Hittites to break their own rules. After the usual flattery in their way of doing business, they told Avraham that none of their people would refuse them a burial spot. That meant on their terms, as a guest in their own family plot. But that wasn't what Avraham was asking for. He was there to get ACHUZAT KEVER the possession of a piece of land in his own right - as a TOSHAV - not as a tolerated hanger-on. In his own mind, to obtain a small part of Eretz Yisrael

that in due course would be joined by the rest. And for this he had to struggle. He had to get the AM HA'ARETZ (23:12) - the general Hittite population - on his side. And then pay an extortionate price for the spot, as a rich man paying to bend the rules. But he got through in the end. The Torah elaborately describes that portion of real estate transferring honourably to Avraham Avinu, giving him his first and only piece of actual titled ownership in the Land.

So Avraham's first task in this Parasha was bury Sarah in a manner that would give him a foothold in the Promised Land. The rest of the Parasha tells us about the second and the third task. The second task was to find suitable wife for his aging son, Yitzchak so that his line would not come to an end. The third was to remarry and have more children on his own account to continue his work.

Both involved YISURIM - painful decisions and anxieties. Though he gave strict instructions to his servant to find a suitable partner in the far-off land of his family, he had to depend on the cooperation of that person who, according to Rashi, had conflicting plans of his own. In any case, the servant had tough bargaining to do all the way: with G-d, with Lavan and Betu'el, any one element of which easily could have gone wrong and put a stop to the whole project. It worked out, but only just. In contrast,

his third project did not seem to have worked out at all, though Avraham Avinu did his best. None of the many children he begot in his last years amounted to anything and so he ended up virtually having to pay them to get as far out of the way as possible (25:6), leaving his life's work and supporting wealth to be continued solely by Yitzchak. And learning from the experience that one worthy successor would be quite enough. Quality, not quantity.

Avraham's latter years gave him little rest. He faced and dealt with his challenges to the very end. Even where they turned out disappointing and failed to meet expectations. Yet overall they were crucial elements in achieving a lasting legacy not only for Klal Yisrael, but for humanity.

One may retire from formal work, but never from life. One's later years are not for running away from problems, but facing them and taking the best action possible.

As Kohelet puts it: 'Sow you seeds in the morning and do not be idle in the evening. You do not know which one will bring success, or whether they are both as good as each other' (Kohelet 11:6). 🌱📖



Reprinted from Living the Halachic Process by Rabbi Daniel Mann - Eretz Hemdah, with their permission [www.erezhemdah.org]

B'racha Acharona on Ice Cream and Ices

Question: If one eats ices or ice cream, does he have to make a b'racha acharona, or is it considered that he ate it too slowly?

Answer: We will start by discussing the parallel discussion among the poskim regarding tea and coffee, and we will then see how ice cream and ices compare.

The Tosefta¹ states that one fully violates the prohibition of drinking on Yom Kippur only if he drinks the relevant amount within the time it takes to drink a R'EVIT² (several seconds). This differs greatly from the corresponding time period for eating, which is K'DEI ACHILAT PRAS, somewhere between 4 and 9 minutes according to the mainstream opinions. The Rambam applies this distinction between eating and drinking to a broad variety of halachot where drinking is of

¹ Yoma 4:3.

² Approximately 3-4 ounces.

importance.³ In contrast, the Ra'avad⁴ maintains that K'DEI ACHILAT PRAS is the time period for drinking, as well. His basis is a Gemara⁵ that says that one who drinks a revi'it of tamei⁶ liquid within K'DEI ACHILAT PRAS becomes TAMEI.

Many poskim assume that one of the ramifications of this machloket is the question of how quickly one must drink a liquid in order to be obligated in a b'racha acharona afterward. Since the Shulchan Aruch⁷ cites both opinions but prefers that of the Rambam, he presumably requires one to drink the required R'VI'IT without unusual pause in order to make a b'racha acharona.⁸ Although not all poskim accept the Rambam's ruling even regarding Yom Kippur, because of the principle of SAFEK B'RACHOT L'HAKEIL (when in doubt, we refrain from possibly unnecessary b'rachot), one who drinks slowly should not make a b'racha acharona.⁹

Some poskim say that the halachic pace of drinking should depend upon the beverage. For example, in the case of hot tea and coffee, which are difficult to drink quickly, drinking at a

normal pace for those drinks warrants a b'racha acharona. However, most poskim say that one should not make a b'racha after drinking tea or coffee at the normally slow pace. Some recommend leaving a cooled off r'vi'it at the end to drink quicker and so that one can make the b'racha.¹⁰

Normally, it takes a few minutes to consume ice cream and ices. The question, which is also the subject of considerable disagreement, is whether consuming ice cream and ices is considered like drinking or like eating. One element of the question hinges on the fact that these are foods that are liquid at room temperature but are served as a frozen solid. Some distinguish between foods and drinks depending on whether one chews it or whether it melts in his mouth and is swallowed like a liquid.¹¹ Others raise a possible distinction based on the food's ingredients. In our case, ice cream, whose ingredients are more food-like, would be treated as a solid, whereas ices, which are primarily frozen, sweet, colored water, should be considered a drink.¹² Additionally, it

³. See Rambam, *Shevitat Asor* 2:4; *Ma'achalot Assurot* 14:9; *Terumot* 10:3.

⁴. *Terumot* 10:3.

⁵. *K'ritot* 13a.

⁶. Halachically impure.

⁷. *Orach Chayim* 612:10.

⁸. *Mishna Berura* 210:1.

⁹. See *ibid*.

¹⁰. *Machatzit HaShekel* to *Magen Avraham* 210:1; *Mishna Berura* op. cit.; see *V'Zot HaBeracha*, p. 40.

¹¹. See *Yabia Omer* VIII, *Orach Chayim* 25. See also *ibid*. V, *Orach Chayim* 18, where, based on this distinction, he says that the broth of soup is also treated like a liquid in this regard.

¹². *B'Tzel HaChochma* 3:114.

seems logical to distinguish between ice cream and ices in another way. At room temperature, the ices mixture is similar to a drink, but it is more refreshing when frozen. In contrast, ice cream is not normally consumed in liquid form, and it functions as a cold, solid dessert.

In the final analysis, one would do better not to make a b'racha acharona on ices, unless possibly if he chews them. Regarding ice cream, it makes more sense to combine the opinions that indicate that as long as one consumes a r'vi'it within K'DEI ACHILAT PRAS,¹³ he should make a b'racha acharona. The safest idea is to avoid the problem by eating a food (other than water)¹⁴ that definitely requires a BOREI N'FASHOT.

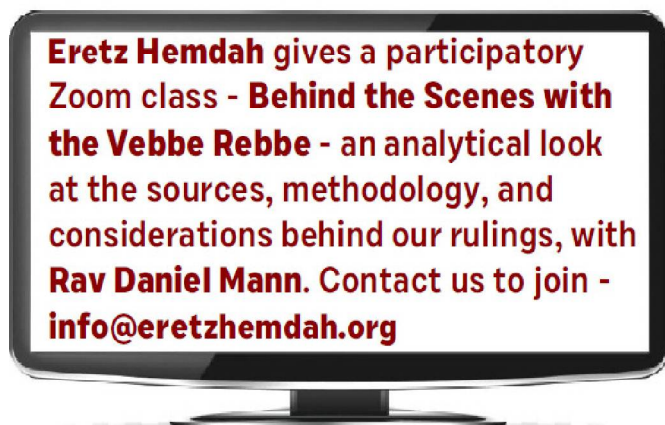


ParshaPlates is a concept and website - parshaplates.com - which makes a Parsha Connection between the weekly sedra and a recipe for your Shabbat Table that will hopefully trigger conversation about Parshat HaShavua, in addition to providing a tasty treat in honor of Shabbat.

Onion Rings Wedding Rings

In this week's Parsha Avraham's servant Eliezer goes to find a wife for Yitzchak. Yitzchak marries Rivka so the food of the week is onion rings which look like wedding rings. Onion rings can be made in different sizes with larger onion rings representing the bracelets Eliezer gave Rivka as jewelry and a smaller onion ring representing a wedding ring.

Shabbat Shalom & B'tayavon!



¹³. If one treats ice cream fully like a solid food, it would suffice to have a k'zayit within k'dei achilat pras - see B'Tzel HaChochma ibid.

¹⁴. Bi'ur Halacha to Orach Chayim 204:7

Ingredients

2 large onions cut 1/4" thick
1 cup flour
1/3 cup cornstarch
1/2 tsp baking powder
1 tsp garlic powder
1 tsp salt
1/4 tsp black pepper
1/4 tsp cayenne pepper or hot paprika
1 and 1/3 cup cold seltzer
2 cups Breadcrumbs (panko)
Vegetable oil for frying

Instructions

- 1] Cut onions into 1/4-inch slices and separate into individual rings.
- 2] In a mixing bowl, mix flour, cornstarch, baking powder, cayenne pepper, garlic powder, salt, pepper.
- 3] Gradually add seltzer and mix until smooth consistency.
- 4] Dip the onion rings into the batter, then coat with breadcrumbs.
- 5] Repeat for all the onion rings.
- 6] Heat oil in a pot and fry onion rings for 1-2 minutes until golden and crisp.

Dvar Torah by Rabbi Chanoch Yeres

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

Graciously shared with PhiloTorah

CHAYEI SARA

This past week, the yahrzeit of Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks, former Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth was commemorated. It would only be appropriate to quote one of ideas of Rabbi Sacks to embody our sense of loss of such a great Jewish leader.

He wrote a fascinating point concerning this parsha, which in turn leaves us with insight to what this great man contributed to this world. He made note that the name of the Parsha seemed a paradox. It is called Chayei Sara, "the life of Sara", yet it begins telling the death of Sara. "Why is a parsha about death called life?" He answered so succinctly, that "not always but often - death and how we face it is a commentary on life and how we live it."

He went on to bring a deeper understanding of Sara based on a further paradox in the Parsha. On the verse "Sara's lifetime was 127 years: the years of Sara's life", Rashi comments that the word "years" is repeated to indicate that the years of Sara's life were all equally good. "How could this be remotely possible?" Rabbi Sacks asked. The text tells us of situations

fraught with moral hazards in Gerar, of her being infertile and having to deal with great strife with Hagar.

Rabbi Sacks gave a tremendous insight into our own perspective of things. "The answer is that to understand a death, we have to understand a life." He enhanced the idea by explaining how Avraham and Sara were among the supreme examples in all of history of what it is to have a "Why" in life. Their entire life was in response to a call, a Divine voice.

They followed that voice to leave their home and go live in a land with strangers and keep the faith and belief that living a life of righteousness and justice would began the process of establishing a nation in their homeland. That was their life mission. What mattered was their faith, not their often-troubled circumstances and challenges.

Rabbi Sacks ends off the insight with powerful words: "I believe that faith helps us find the "Why" that allows us to bear almost any "How". The serenity of Sara's and Avraham's death was eternal testimony to how they lived."

Rabbi Sack's numerous insights and Torah thoughts transformed our world into a one of thought, sensitivity, rich in vision and compassion. He assisted us in seeking out

the answers that make the world a better place to live. We remember this great individual and cherish all the great words of wisdom he endowed upon us. 🕯️

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

The Weekly 'Hi All' by Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

CHAYEI SARA 5785

In addressing the obvious question as to why the Torah devotes so many verses (24:10-60) to narrate - in duplicate - the story of Eliezer's seeking a wife for Yitzchak, the Midrash makes this unusual statement (B'reishit Rabba 60:8) -

"The conversation of the servants of the Patriarchs is more pleasing before Gd than the Torah of their descendants, for the episode of Eliezer's [quest for Yitzchak's wife] is doubled in the Torah while many essential elements of the Torah were given only by allusion."

But why should this be so? While the stories of our great Biblical ancestors are certainly of great consequence and meaning, how can they compare in importance to Gd's subsequent mitzvot which are the very foundation of our entire Jewish identity?

Of the many interesting answers proposed, let us present three

approaches, all of which are not mutually exclusive. In these explanations, it is important to note that while the Midrash makes specific mention of the "servants of the Patriarchs", our Sages expanded this reference to include the happenings of all our great Biblical figures.

Let us first introduce these answers with a clever and ingenious reading of the Midrash which underlies all of these solutions. Rav Chaim Haber-stam (the Sanzer Rebbe, 19th cent.) would have us understand the Midrash as stating not that one was more important than the other - the "conversations" over the Torah, but rather that the second would be the cause for the first; namely, that the reason why the conversations of our ancestors are so significant is precisely because of the Torah - the interpretations - of these narratives by their descendants.

To begin: R. Yitzchok Arama (15th cent. Spain) takes notice of something quite obvious (Akeidat Yitzchak, Chayei Sara, 22, s.v. U'MEI'ATA) when he observes that the repetition of the story deals specifically with shidduchim - match-making. The Midrash is thus coming to underscore the vital and central importance of choosing the right marriage partner, and how critical such a choice is for the perpetuation of the great Patriarchal covenant culminating at Sinai with the birth of

the Jewish people. When we consider, how throughout the Bible, the topic of marriage is frequently discussed, e.g., Yaakov & Rachel and Leah, Yehuda & Tamar, Amram & Yocheved, Boaz & Ruth, David & Michal and Bat Sheva - the axiological significance of marriage and family should be abundantly clear. It is then for this reason in particular that the story of the first shidduch is repeated and why the Midrash deems this as so very appropriate.

The Chofetz Chayim offers another answer to explain the Midrash and the doubling of the story (Chovat HaShemira, ch. 2, s.v. V'HENAI). He focuses on the word SICHA, meaning speech, to advance and accentuate one his most noteworthy and outstanding contributions to the ethical treasure house of our people - the supreme importance of using our words properly and wisely: no LASHON HARA, no gossiping, no verbal abuse, making every word count, etc. The reason why such sicha is so very pleasing to the Almighty is because all of Torah - the Torah of the children" - is predicated upon the word, the right word, the sacred word. For, after all, what distinguishes man from the beast is our sophisticated speech.

A final, but by no means the last of the answers to explain the Midrash is suggested by the Imrei Kohen (R. Yechiel Michel Holner, 20th cent.).

While the importance of mitzvot cannot be gainsaid, it is extremely valuable to read of the deeds and words of our Forefathers, for in so doing, we are inspired to emulate their attributes, and this in turn brings us closer in sanctity and love to the Almighty Himself. A similar idea is mentioned by the Nachalat Yaakov (R. Yaakov M'Lisa, 18th-19th cent.), referencing the prophet (Yirmiyahu 9:23) who declares: "But let him... understand and know Me, for I am the Lord who exercise faithful love, justice, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, says the Lord." If one wishes to appreciate the grandeur and wonders of HaShem, let him reflect upon the imposing and courageous lives of our noble and heroic Biblical ancestors. Therefore, we are enjoined to read the Biblical narratives, for in so doing, we happily discover that, even in duplicate, the many seemingly slight textual differences in the repletion, offer elegant moral lessons, nuanced and cloaked, but nevertheless, profoundly meaningful.

Reflecting upon this last insight, it should come as no surprise to note the vastly popular biographies of our celebrated rabbinic figures, both past and present, and, even more widespread, the abundance of books, each recounting true and inspiring stories of both simple and great people. The immense popularity of these publica-

tions can perhaps be explained by the pressing need - I would say, the religious thirst - that we, as Jews, have to not only study the halachic "dos and don'ts" of our religious way of life, but to connect with the real people who lived such lives.

As Rav Soloveitchik often expressed it: the mechanical halacha can frequently appear dry and routine. It can be compared to the concrete, steel skeleton of a building - not all that appealing, but without such a strong and durable structure, nothing can be fashioned. Even so, the scaffolding of a building does not a home make. Once the framework is complete, it's the interior design with its aesthetic furnishings and beautiful colors that creates the experience of a place to live in and enjoy. So too with our religious life. The mitzvot are fundamental and foundational, both in their observance and study, but they are just the outer platform and shell - absolutely necessary, but not nearly enough. To tap into the experiential dimension of our Judaism, to experience the passion and ecstasy of being Jewish, to feel the excitement and live in the moment of our spiritual journeys - all this and more is achieved by identifying on some level with those great religious personalities, along with the simple yet extraordinary Jews, who have each acted with moral excellence and deep faith. Hence, the plethora of biog-

raphies and stories, all of which together bring the halacha to life and make being Jewish a thrilling and profoundly meaningful existence!

The narrative sections of the Bible are about our people, each with their virtues and flaws, their brilliant achievements and their failures, their spiritual heights and tormenting lows. And if what our Sages say is true, that MAASEI AVOT SIMAN LABANIM, that the deeds of our ancestors foreshadow our own, then they are us! We would therefore do well by reading carefully the "conversations" of our ancestors so that we can enter into their lives and accompany them on their journeys, all the while learning the timeless lessons their stories teach. And if we succeed with that exercise, we will merit filling the stately majestic halachic structure of Torah with the glorious and magnificent experience, the wondrous moral and spiritual exhilaration of being totally Jewish! 🙌

Insights into Halacha

- Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

Ohr Somayach (yspitz@ohr.edu)

Bubby Didn't Eat Bugs

If one would glance at the full-page glossy ads in the ubiquitous Jewish magazine, it would seem that produce growers are falling over themselves

to provide every possible green with the best of hechsherim, all while stating the various methods used to ascertain that one should not stumble and transgress these Biblical prohibitions. "Greenhouse Grown", "Triple Washed", "Insect Free", and "Requires No Checking" scream out from the ads. While everything is done to guarantee what is most definitely a tremendous public service, some might say "Well, if nowadays we utilize innovation and technology to ensure that there are no bugs lurking in our lettuce, what did the previous generations do? They did not know, and actually could not have known, about the proper methods of checking for and making certain that their food did not contain any uninvited guests."

This point to ponder is not purely academic, as recently a major Jewish publication featured this very question, with the cover quote, "Did Bubby Eat Bugs?". Although the author did a fine job explaining the issues and problems involved with bug infestation and how to make sure that one's food should not contain any crunchy crawlers, and even from a halachic standpoint, still, the title question remained more or less unanswered.

However, before we just decide to possibly denigrate our ancestors and query their choice of produce, one

would do well to realize that there actually are other more lenient opinions regarding different halachic aspects of tola'im (worms; also the generic term used to refer to insect infestation).

For example, regarding what appear to be specks on the peel of a citrus fruit, there is some halachic debate over whether one has to assume that they actually are insects.

Although many rule stringently with this, there are several contemporary authorities who are lenient. See for example, Shu"t Shevet HaLevi (vol. 7, 122); Shmiras Shabbos K'Hilchasa (Ch. 3, 37, 105), Halichos Shlomo - Tefilla (Ch. 4, 25, 78) and V'Aleihu Lo Yibol (vol. 2, Y"D 1); Shu"t Igros Moshe (Y"D vol. 2, 146 s.v. umah); and Yalkut Yosef (IV"H vol. 2, 84, 21).

Another leniency (known as the Shitat HaKreisi U'Pleisi) is perhaps an insect born inside a food item does not maintain the full halachic status of a bug, and might be considered nullified.

Those who follow this leniency include the Kreisi U'Pleisi (Y"D 100, 4; he actually later retracts), Rav Shlomo Kluger (Shu"t Tuv Taam V'Daas (3, 1, 160), the Ksav Sofer (Shu"t Y"D 63), the Imrei Baruch (Y"D beg. 100), the Mishkenos Yaakov (Shu"t Y"D 30), and the Aruch HaShulchan (Y"D 100, 13-18).

Also, it is worthwhile to note that

according to virtually every halachic authority, anything that cannot be seen by the naked eye (including miniscule and microscopic insects) are not considered present.

In fact, many great poskim and gedolim over the generations worked tirelessly to find any sort of justification to allow the eating of many foods. In those days, especially in the summer, many foods including basic wheat and grain were extremely prone to insect infestation, and the deplorable storage conditions did not help matters. These gedolim included Rav Yonason Eibeshutz, Rav Shlomo Kluger, the Ksav Sofer, the Mishkenos Yaakov and the Aruch HaShulchan.

Several authorities tried to find other hetterim including the Aruch Hashulchan's controversial take that since bugs are generally considered disgusting, they are immediately nullified; and the Kreisi U'Pleisi's (above, 2) and Avnei Nezer's (Shu"t Y"D 81, 6) opinion that even a beryah has a din of bittul [not like the general consensus among the Shulchan Aruch (Y"D 100) and the main commentaries].

Others, including the Yad Yehuda, tried to give suggestions to lessen the odds of eating bugs.

Their collective reasoning was (loose translation) "to find merit for Bnei Yisrael to save them on the Day of

Judgment, and, Heaven forbid, to say that all of Bnei Yisrael would stumble on such a great sin, as it is a near impossibility to find any food, especially in the summer days, that has no trace of any sort of insect, and it is almost impossible to properly check."

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l was asked near the end of his life about prohibiting a certain type of fruit due to a possible insect issue. Rav Moshe responded that it may not be publicized that this fruit is prohibited; as aside for the fact that there were lenient opinions to rely upon (in that specific situation), "it is prohibited to spread rumors about earlier generations, who could not have possibly been stringent on these issues, as they were unaware of them."

Rav Moshe's thrust and main point was not that people from earlier generations were not culpable, even though they may have been eating non-kosher; rather it was that even if it is assumed that the halacha generally follows the more stringent opinion, we may not publicize that certain issues are asur (prohibited). Rav Moshe was teaching us that is preferable to rely on a lenient opinion (and saying that previous generations had what to rely on as well) than to say that something is definitely asur, and cast negative aspersions on previous generations – whom,

without any doubt, were on a higher spiritual level than we are, especially as they are at least one step closer to Har Sinai.

Although it must be noted that many disagree with the above-mentioned leniencies, and the general halacha does not seem to rely upon them l'chatchila, nevertheless, these very same hetterim are also what Rav Moshe declared are preferable to rely upon than to disparage previous generations. This should serve as "food for thought" to clarify the matter and to help quiet any doubts or concerns that were left about "Bubby eating bugs".

Disclaimer: These are just a few basic guidelines and overview of the Halacha discussed in this article. This is by no means a complete comprehensive authoritative guide, but rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issue. One should not compare similar cases in order to rules in any real case, but should refer his questions to a competent Halachic authority.

For any questions, comments or for the full Mareh Mekomot & sources, please email the author: yspitz@ohr.edu

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz serves as the **Sho'el U'Meishiv** and **Rosh Chavura** of the **Ohr Lagolah Halacha Kollel** at **Yeshivas Ohr Somayach** in **Yerushalayim**. He also currently writes a contemporary halacha column for the Ohr Somayach website titled **"Insights Into Halacha"**.

ohr.edu/this_week/insights_into_halacha/

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Rabbi Yehuda Spitz's English halacha sefer, "Food: A Halachic Analysis" (Mosaica/Feldheim) containing over 500 pages featuring over 30 comprehensive chapters discussing the myriad halachic issues pertaining to food, is now available online and in bookstores everywhere."



CHAYEI SARA

GM The opening pasuk of Chayei Sara (B'reishit 23:1) is

וַיְהִי וַיָּיָם שָׂרָה בִּמְאֹה שָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים
שָׁנָה וַיָּסַבַּע שָׁנִים שֵׁנִי וַיָּיָם שָׂרָה:

"Sara had lived to be 100+20+7 (127) years old. [These were] the years of Sarah's life."

When doing a GM search, I never know in advance if some other pasuk of interest will show up. When such a pasuk does, I try to be able to say something about the match.

Before I tell you what I found, let's take a look at a Rashi quoting the Midrash B'reishit Rabba that describes Sara Imeinu's special life. That Rashi is on the pasuk at the end of perek 24, when Yitzchak brings Rivka into his mother's tent, and the midrash says that when Sara died, the specialness of her tent disappeared; but when Rivka came into the family, it returned.

...שָׁכַל זְמַן שְׂשָׁרָה קִיָּמָה הָיָה גַּר דְּלוּי
מִתְּרַב שֶׁצֶת לְתֶרֶב שֶׁצֶת
וּצְרָכָה מְלוּיָהּ צִטָּסָה וְעַן קָשׁוּר עַל
הָאֶחָל...

"...For while Sara was living, a light had been burning in the tent from one Shabbat eve to the next, there was always a blessing in the dough (a miraculous increase) and a cloud was always hanging over the tent (as a divine protection)..."

That's a pretty nice summary of Sara's life, with the association with Shabbat and the Mikdash - Shabbat atmosphere, tent, cloud, light (Menora), special bread (Lechem HaPanim).

Here are both Vayikra 19:30 and Vayikra 26:2 - two identical p'sukim - the gimatriya of each (3623) matches Chayei Sara's opener -

אֶת־שִׁבְתֵּי תִי תִשְׁבְּרוּ וּבִמְקָדְשִׁי תִירָאוּ
אֲנִי יְיָ ה'הוֹה:

"Keep My Sabbaths and revere My sanctuary. I am God."

Sara's life was a prototype of the Shabbat and Mikdash, making her truly SARA IMEINU.

Gimatriya Matches do not prove anything, but they sometimes make a beautiful point. That's what this GM does.

RED ALERT!

CHAYEI SARA

*by Rabbi Eddie Davis (RED)
of the Young Israel of Hollywood -
Ft. Lauderdale (Florida)*

DIVREI TORAH

- “Avraham came to eulogize Sara and to cry for her” (23:2). The commentators are perplexed as to where did Avraham come from to eulogize her. After the Akeida in Yerushalayim, he went to Be’er Sheva and he came from there to Chevron where Sarah died. But what was she doing in Chevron? Maybe she went looking for Avraham and Yitzchak. Or the Midrash states that Hashem had brought her there to die because she was to be buried there. The eulogy was about her life. Born in an idolatrous house. Her grandfather (Terach) made and sold idols to the public. Yet she rejected the beliefs of her house. She educated her son in the way she (and her husband)

believed. (Oznayim LaTorah). A eulogy is supposed to evoke tears. And Avraham cried a little bit in public. (Baal HaTurim). His loss was great but he kept most of his tears and sadness to himself.

- Even though Hashem had promised him the Land of Canaan, Avraham felt the need to purchase a portion of the land to help secure recognized rights to the land. Scripture records that Yaakov bought land in the area of Shechem. And King David bought Yerushalayim and specifically the area of the Temple Mount from the Yevusim. The Midrash points out that historically these three cities will become contested hot spots between the Jews and their neighbors. Even in the modern period, this statement has become the reality. [personal note: Years ago I went to daven Mincha at the Patriarchs’ graves, the area which Avraham purchased. A lightbulb went out by Yitzchak’s tomb and a fight broke out between Jews and Arabs about who was to change the lightbulb. The Israeli army intervened to keep the peace and decided to allow the Arabs to do it. I asked the Israeli lieutenant what the fuss was about. He explained to me that the one who changed the bulb is a sign that he owned the property. So then, why give it to the Arabs? Because, he said, Arabs would go to war over this issue.]

- In the beginning of chapter 24, when Avraham is going to send his trusted foreman Eliezer to find a wife for Yitzchak, the Torah says that was old, well on in years. Perhaps that was the reason Avraham could not do it himself. But 40 years earlier, when Avraham and Sara were about to conceive their only son, the Torah also said that “Avraham and Sara were old, well on in years...” (18:11). And they were physically able to do what was necessary. It seems that aging is a gradual process. Scientists today tell us that a man hits his physical best at age 27. After that he will begin his decline. I can attest to the gradual but definite decline that defines the body’s inability to perform as well as he used to. Avraham is not at his best to be as active as he once was, but he was able to father another six sons in his advanced years.

- There is a Midrash that I find to be a major exaggeration: that Rivka was three years old when she married Yitzchak. It is highly unlikely that a three year old could draw water from a well and give camels water to drink. But now comes the challenging part. If I reject the Midrash as the truth, then I need to figure out what message our Sages are telling us with their story. When a little girl is under three years of age, she will not learn and absorb anything from her

surroundings. Rivka was a pure young lady, not at all influenced by the idolatrous family life. She didn’t absorb the bad character traits from her brother or father. This is a valuable message that our Sages were telling us about the next matriarch. She is a worthy bride for Yitzchak, for she is honest and a good candidate to absorb Abraham’s teaching and way of life.

- An unbreakable law in Avraham’s house was that his sons were not to marry a Canaanite woman. Not just because they were idolatrous. Avraham’s family was completely idolatrous. Chizkuni states that a Canaanite woman has parents living nearby. And her family would claim to own part of the Promised Land, because of their daughter’s status in Avraham’s family. Being from a country far removed from Canaan would cut her ties with them and render her more willing to accept Avraham’s teachings. Avraham’s monotheistic beliefs were a true break from the current beliefs in the entire region, if not the entire world, at that time. Radical, to say the least. This life requires a strong belief in something that you cannot touch or see. A unique system of Emunah, faith, that we take for granted.

- At the end of the Parsha, Avraham’s new wife and new life are a great deal different from the one with Sara.

None of his new sons are disciples of his way of life. The Patriarchal home has disappeared. Avraham is well and healthy. He lives to see the birth and early life of his grandsons, Yaakov and Eisav. But we don't see him as a player in Yitzchak's home. When Yaakov is cooking lentil soup, we are told that it was for the family of mourners returning from Avraham's funeral. Leadership of the family had been successfully transmitted to Yitzchak. All the converts and followers of Avraham and Sara have gone in different directions. The house of Avraham has collapsed, leaving the small family isolated and separate from the world around them, just as when Avraham started out, years earlier.

- When Avraham died, Yishmael had resurfaced and accompanied his younger brother Yitzchak at the funeral. Rashi commented that Yishmael had repented from his bad traits. In the Midrash, when Yishmael left with his mother, he began his own family. Years later, Avraham travelled to visit Yishmael, with Sara's permission. Twice. Neither time was Avraham successful in seeing Yishmael, but Yishmael was aware of his father's visit. So the ties between father and son were not completely severed. They continued and set the stage for Yishmael to return. Although the Torah narrative does not include this story, the Torah itself

leaves the door open, just by the fact recorded in the Torah that Yishmael was there at the funeral.

Questions by RED

From the text

1. Name the three people who died in this Parsha and the age in which they died? (23:1, 25:7, 25:17)
2. As Avraham got older, what special mission did he ask Eliezer to undertake? (24:3,4)
3. What character trait was Eliezer looking for when he searched for a wife for Yitzchak? (24:14)
4. What was Yitzchak doing when Rivka met him? (24:63)
5. Who buried Avraham? (25:9)

From Rashi

6. From where does Kiryat Arba derive its name? (23:2)
7. Why is the death of Sara written right after the Akeidat Yitzchak ? (23:2)
8. In the event Eliezer could not find a wife for Yitzchak from the house of Betuel, where else could he go? (24:8)
9. Who else did Eliezer want Yitzchak to marry? (24:39)
10. What three miracles reappeared after Yitzchak brought Rivka into his tent? (24:67)

From the Rabbis

11. Why did Avraham not want Yitzchak to leave Eretz Yisrael (even to obtain a wife)? (Chizkuni)
12. In what language did Eliezer speak to the family in Aram? (Chizkuni)
13. Why did Avraham not consider marrying Yitzchak to one of the converts he created? (Oznayim LaTorah)

Midrash

14. Why were Avraham's camels muzzled?

Haftara - M'lachim Alef

15. Which of King David's sons rebelled and had himself crowned king while King David was still alive?

Relationships

- a) Ada - Amalek
- b) Bilha - Naftali
- c) Amram - Uziel
- d) Eliav - Danan
- e) Moshe - Elazar

ANSWERS

1. Sarah (127), Avraham (175), Yishmael (137).
2. To seek a wife for Yitzchak.
3. Kindness
4. Strolling in the field. (Rashi: he was davening.)

5. Yitzchak and Yishmael

6.

1) Four giants who lived there.

2) Four couples who were buried there.

7. Since she died as a result upon hearing the news of the Akeida.

8. To the family of Aner, Eshkol, or Mamrei.

9. Eliezer's daughter

10. A cloud hovering over the tent, an abundance in the dough, a lit candle from Friday to Friday.

11. Since Yitzchak was offered as a sacrifice to Hashem, he should not leave Eretz Yisrael. He is holy.

12. In Hebrew

13. Because their faith was not strong.

14. So that they could not graze in other people's fields.

15. Adoniyahu

Relationships

- a) Grandmother & Grandson
- b) Mother & Son
- c) Brothers
- d) Father & Son
- e) Uncle & Nephew