



**Rabbi Hershel Schachter**  
**The TorahWeb Foundation**  
**Leaving Eretz Yisroel**

The avos were commanded to live in Eretz Yisroel. Today we also have this mitzvah, and therefore one may only leave Eretz Yisroel when the conditions there are unreasonable. If one simply can not make a living in Eretz Yisroel, and will have to live off of charity, and in chutz la'aretz he will be able to make a living, there is no mitzvah of yishuv Eretz Yisroel,

because that is an unreasonable situation.

Likewise the Talmud says that one who wants to learn Torah in a specific yeshiva in chutz la'aretz, and will not be happy at any of the yeshivas in Eretz Yisroel, or one who fell in love with a girl from chutz la'aretz and will be broken hearted if we insist that he may not leave Eretz Yisroel, may leave for the sake of lilmud Torah or lisa isha, because the alternative is simply unreasonable.

In this week's parsha we read that Avraham Avinu sent Eliezer to chuta la'aretz to arrange a shidduch for Yitzchok. Avraham emphasized to Eliezer that under no circumstances may he allow Yitzchok to leave Eretz Yisroel. Why couldn't Yitzchok leave Eretz Yisroel? Isn't it the case that for the purpose of a shidduch one is permitted to leave Eretz Yisroel?

The explanation for this is given by Rashi in next week's sedra. Yitzchok always followed in the footsteps of his father Avraham - maintaining the masorah. The Torah tells us that he dug the exact same wells that Avraham had dug and called them by exactly the same names that Avraham had. So its no surprise that when there was a famine during the lifetime of Yitzchok, he prepared himself to go down to Egypt - just as his father Avraham had done years earlier. On his way to Egypt, Hashem appears to him in Gerar and tells him he may not go to Egypt. On the occasion of akeidas Yitzchok, Yitzchok was consecrated as a korban, and if a korban is taken outside of its "designated location" it becomes pasul. During the times of the Beis Hamikdash, the designated location for kodshai kodoshim was the azara, while the designated location for kodshim kalim was all of Yerushalayim. In the days of the avos, the azara and Yerushalayim had not been consecrated, so the designated location for all korbaos was Eretz Yisroel. Although at the time of a famine Avraham Avinu was permitted to leave Eretz Yisroel, Yitzchok, a consecrated korban, was not.

It is interesting to note that this halacha (that a korban will become pasul if it's removed from its designated location) only takes affect after shechita, which constitutes the first avodah done to the sacrifice. On the occasion of the akeida, no avodos were actually done to Yitzchok. But nonetheless, since the ram which was offered in place of Yitzchok was slaughtered, that shechita was considered as if it had been done to Yitzchok himself. Yitzchok Avinu had the halachic status of a korban on which avodos were done.

Even the avodah of haktara which was performed on the ram was considered as if it had been done to Yitzchok. Towards the end of the tochacha in parshas Behar the Torah states that Hashem will remember the covenant that He entered into with Yaakov; as well as His covenant with Yitzchok; and He will also remember His covenant with Avraham. Rashi on that pasuk quotes from the tana'im in the Sifra that the verb "to remember" only appears in connection with Yaakov and Avraham, but not in connection with Yitzchok. The reason for this is that one only has to use his memory to recall someone (or something) who is not in front of him. The avodah hahaktara that was done to the limbs of the ram was considered as having been done to Yitzchok, and Yitzchok's ashes are piled up on the

mizbeach right before Hashem. Therefore there is no need to remember him.

Avraham Avinu did not misunderstand his instructions regarding the akeida. He was to consecrate his son Yitzchok as a korban olah. Under normal circumstances the avodos of any olah must be done to that particular korban, and here the malach indicated to Avraham that the avodos done to the ram will be considered as if they had been done to Yitzchok. Yitzchok was not only considered as a korban upon whom the first avodah (of shechita) had already been performed, but even the final avodah (of haktara) done to the ram was also halachically carried over to Yitzchok.

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**UNEMPLOYMENT :: Rabbi Berel Wein**

Not having a job is not only a financial difficulty. Perhaps just as importantly, it is a major emotional and psychological challenge as well. The unemployed feel rejected and of little use to themselves, their families and society generally. Most of the time this is not of their making but they are buffeted by a suddenly unfriendly economic downturn that forces employers to cut back on the number of employees that their businesses can support. Nonetheless the effects of losing a job and being unable to find another one quickly are devastating.

There are many who have highly developed professional skills or years of experience and they are simply unwilling or unable to accept what they consider to be work beneath their social or educational stature. All human egos are fragile and it is psychologically and emotionally difficult for former middle level managers for instance to become janitors or sanitation people if those jobs are in fact available to them.

Perhaps it is the emphasis on higher education and training which is so much a part of the ethos of our current society that prevents people from descending gracefully in rank and importance in order to be employed. In any event it is a difficult situation for those who find themselves to be talented, industrious and efficient in their chosen field of endeavor and yet without work or employment. Unemployment insurance may help to lessen the financial pain but I believe that many people resent having to be on the dole and the charity of others. Life is oftentimes tough, hard and unfair.

Unemployment was the major problem of Eastern European Jewry in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In many provinces of the Jewish Pale of Settlement, the Jewish unemployment rate approached an outstandingly vicious forty percent. In order to ease the pain of the unemployed, the Jewish society created different types of communal work.

There was a "veker" – someone whose task was to wake people for synagogue services in the early morning. There were many gabbaim in the synagogue with the work of one gabbai distributed between three or four men. The badchan – jokester and comedian who performed at weddings – was deemed to be a profession though certainly not a lucrative one. The shadchan – the matchmaker – was also considered to be a profession though most parents could hardly afford to pay any substantial fee to him or her

Because of this terrible unemployment situation, Jews were considered to be luftmentschen – people who lived from the air and never really engaged in any truly productive work. This was one of the criticisms of traditional Eastern European Jewish society mounted by the non-Jewish society against the Jews and echoed by the Bund, the Labor Zionists and other Jewish groups as well.

Because of the dire poverty of the Jewish society, many Jews resorted to types of activities which were technically illegal under Czarist laws, which officially discriminated against Jews. The statement of the rabbis that "a

poor person is considered to be a dead person” certainly was a reality in Eastern European Jewish society of the time.

It is ironic that much of current unemployment is concentrated in the educated ranks of the upper middle class. Jews pushed their children into higher education at almost all cost because they saw it as a buffer and safeguard against unemployment in later life. Jewish parents and their offspring desired to enter the professions that seemingly would guarantee them financial stability for a lifetime – medicine, law, civil government service and professorships.

But the current severe economic downturn has affected even those areas of endeavor previously thought of as being immune. The Talmud in discussing the issue of employment and work advances a number of different ideas regarding the matter. Rabi Meir stated that the study of Torah is paramount even over work preparation. Other rabbis had differing opinions. All agreed that enforced unemployment was a negative factor in personal lives of Jews and in the general Jewish society as a whole.

I had a member in my congregation in Monsey who every Friday night would tell me how happy he was that he met that week’s payroll and families would be able to survive because of their work. Employment and unemployment are not only economic factors, like dots on a graph. There is a tremendous human profit and loss involved as well. That is what makes the current dire economic and job scene so depressing. There is more than the pure bottom line involved in these matters. Human lives and families should also be considered.

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### Weekly Parsha :: CHAYEI SARAH :: Rabbi Berel Wein

Death is not only tragic for those intimately affected it also always poses problems of succession and reorganization of the family, company or institution. Avraham and Sarah, the founders of the Jewish nation pass from the scene in this week’s parsha. They are succeeded by Yitzchak and Rivka and in fact the majority of the parsha concerns itself with how Yitzchak marries Rivka and they establish their new home together.

In personality, temperament and action Yitzchak and Rivka differ markedly from Avraham and Sarah. Whereas Avraham and Sarah devoted themselves to reaching as many outsiders as they could and were actively engaged in spreading the idea of monotheism in the surrounding society, Yitzchak and Rivka seem to take a more conservative approach. They attempted to consolidate what they accomplished and to build a family nation rather than to try to attract more strangers to their cause.

As we will see in next week’s parsha the struggle of Yitzchak and Rivka is an internal family struggle as how to raise Eisav and Yaakov and guarantee the continuity of the ideas and beliefs of Avraham and Sarah through their biological offspring. Eventually it is only through Yaakov that Avraham and Sarah continue and become the blessing that the Lord promised that they would be. The world struggle that engaged Avraham and Sarah becomes a struggle within Avraham and Sarah’s family itself.

It becomes abundantly clear that the main struggle of the Jewish people will be to consolidate itself and thus influence the general world by osmosis, so to speak. The time of Avraham and Sarah has passed and new times require different responses to the challenges of being a blessing to all of humankind.

There are those in the Jewish world who are committed to “fixing the world” at the expense of Jewish traditional life and Torah law. Yet the simple truth is that for the Jewish people to be effective in influencing the general society for good there must be a strong and committed Jewish people. King Solomon in Shir Hashirim warns us that “I have watched the vineyards of others but I have neglected guarding my own vineyard.”

The attempted destruction and deligitimization of the Jewish people or the State of Israel, God forbid, in order to further fuzzy, do-good, universal humanistic ideas is a self-destructive viewpoint of the purpose of Judaism. Without Jews there is no Judaism and without Judaism there is no true moral conscience left in the world. Therefore it seems evident to me that the primary imperative of Jews today is to strengthen and support Jewish family life, Jewish Torah education and the state of Israel.

We are in the generations of Yitzchak and Rivka and therefore we have to husband our resources and build ourselves first. We have as yet not made good the population losses of the holocaust seventy years ago! If there will be a strong and numerous Jewish people then the age of Avraham and Sarah will reemerge. The tasks of consolidation of Jewish life as represented by the lives of Yitzchak and Rivka should be the hallmark of our generation as well.  
Shabat shalom.

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### TORAH WEEKLY

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Parshat Chayei Sara

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - [www.seasonsofthemoon.com](http://www.seasonsofthemoon.com)

### OVERVIEW

Sarah, Mother of the Jewish People, passes on at age 127. After mourning and eulogizing her, Avraham seeks to bury her in the Cave of Machpela. As this is the burial place of Adam and Chava, Avraham pays its owner, Ephron the Hittite, an exorbitant sum. Avraham sends his faithful servant Eliezer to find a suitable wife for his son, Yitzchak, making him swear to choose a wife only from among Avrahams family. Eliezer travels to Aram Naharaim and prays for a sign. Providentially, Rivka appears. Eliezer asks for water. Not only does she give him water, but she draws water for all 10 of his thirsty camels. (Some 140 gallons!) This extreme kindness marks her as the right wife for Yitzchak and a suitable Mother of the Jewish People. Negotiations with Rivka’s father and her brother Lavan result in her leaving with Eliezer. Yitzchak brings Rivka into his mother Sarahs tent, marries her and loves her. He is then consoled for the loss of his mother. Avraham remarries Hagar who is renamed Ketura to indicate her improved ways. Six children are born to them. After giving them gifts, Avraham sends them to the East. Avraham passes away at the age of 175 and is buried next to Sarah in the Cave of Machpela.

### INSIGHTS

#### Waterwork

**“She descended to the spring, filled her jug and ascended. The servant ran towards her..” (24:16,17)**

Sometimes when we go to do a mitzvah, all kinds of things seem to make it more difficult. Why is that?

In this week’s Torah portion Rashi explains that Eliezer ran to Rivka when he saw the water level rise as she came to water her camels.

The Ramban infers that the water rose by itself, because in verse 20, when Rivka waters Eliezer’s camels, the Torah mentions that Rivka ‘drew the waters’, whereas when watering her own camels, the verse doesn’t mention that she had to draw water, meaning that the extra effort of drawing the water was not required because the water came to her.

The question remains, however, why didn’t the waters rise to Rivka when she went to water Eliezer’s camels? Moreover, if Rivka merited supernatural help when watering her own camels, surely she should merit no less when doing a mitzvah?

When a person does a mitzvah, G-d helps him or her to do the mitzvah in the best possible way. When Rivka went to water her camels, the water rose up to spare her the extra effort, but when she went to water Eliezer’s camels she did this with the intention to do the mitzvah of gemilut chasadim - performing an act of kindness. If G-d had brought up the water to meet her, this would have minimized her own involvement in the mitzvah.

G-d wanted Rivka’s physical action to be as complete as the intention of her heart.

Source: Based on Mayana Shel Torah

Written and compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

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**Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum**  
**Parshas Chayei Sarah**

### **Sarah's lifetime was one hundred years, and twenty years, and seven years; the years of Sarah's life. (23:1)**

The simple explanation of the pasuk is that usually one reaches the age of "one hundred," then added on to that are the "twenty" and the "seven." Rashi, however, views the age progression conversely. At her one-hundred year milestone, Sarah Imeinu was as pure from sin as she was when she was twenty, and her beauty at age twenty was as wholesome as when she was seven. The Torah then reiterates with the phrase, Shnei chaye Sarah, "the years of Sarah's life." What is the purpose in this seemingly redundant statement? Rashi explains that the Torah seeks to emphasize that kulan shavin l'tovah, "they were all equal for goodness." This seems questionable, since Sarah's life was far from comfortable. She suffered through a famine and was taken by Pharaoh and, later, Avimelech, both undesirable human beings; she was barren for most of her life and died under what appeared to be tragic circumstances, when she heard that her only son was about to be slaughtered. How do all of these occurrences fall under the category of tovah, good?

"And you will see My back, but My face may not be seen" (Shemos 33:23). Horav Shlomo Yosef Zevin, zl, quotes the famous pasuk which was Hashem's response to Moshe Rabbeinu's request to behold His Glory. The Almighty replied that no mortal can see His face; they can only see His back. Interpreted in our vernacular, the pasuk is teaching us that man cannot comprehend Hashem's ways. No man can view the "face," Hashem's actions "up front," at the beginning, when they occur. All too often, His decrees appear to be unreasonable, too demanding, and even, at times, overly harsh, but, veritably, "Is it not from the mouth of the most High that evil and good emanate?" (Eichah 3:38). Everything is organized and part of the Divine plan. In the end, one looks back and, with the help of hindsight, perceives that everything was really good. "And you will see My back," at the end you will look back and see the good, "but My face may not be seen." Initially, the human mind cannot understand this. It takes time, and the entire plan has to play itself out. Then it all makes sense. It is all truly good.

Rav Zevin explains that the power of a Jew's belief is so exalted that even when he first enters a challenging situation, he goes into it with the deep-rooted belief that "all that Hashem does is for the good." The Torah teaches that the Jews believed in Hashem and in Moshe, His servant. This sense of trust was immediately followed up with Az yashir, singing the song of praise to Hashem. The Kedushas Levi asserts that this was done even prior to their salvation, when the water was up to their necks. They had not yet been saved; they were not yet in the clear, but they believed in Hashem; they trusted Moshe and, thus, were prepared to offer praise - so real was their belief in salvation.

The Talmud in Sanhedrin 92b relates that King Nevuchadnezar wanted to sing shirah, praise, to Hashem. An angel came and slapped his face. Rav Zevin quotes from a great tzaddik that the angel was not expressing his disdain with the wicked king's shirah. He did not care if Nevuchadnezar sang shirah or not. The angel was hinting to him, "You want to say shirah when you are successful, and the crown representing your power is sitting comfortably on your head. Here is a slap on the face. Now - let me see if you are still prepared to sing praise." Nevuchadnezar is unable to sing shirah after he has received a slap. Only the Jewish nation has the resolution to sing amid pain. Only they can "bless G-d for bad as for good." They see beyond the pain, past the misery, over challenge.

Sarah Imeinu accepted all the adversity which she experienced with a sense of love. She understood that Hashem gives us only good, and, therefore, she trusted that this was good. While at the time of her experience it seemed far from positive, she believed that it was all part of Hashem's plan, and that it was inherently good. Later on, her trust and faith were proven correct. All of her years were kulan shavin l'tovah, "equally good." Thus, the years of her life are counted backwards, to teach that afterwards it was revealed that it was "all good."

### **A prince of G-d you are among us. (23:6)**

Avraham Avinu represented the best there can be in a Jew. While he was the epitome of spirituality, he was also accessible as a human being, revered and admired by all. He had the dignity of royalty; indeed, he was recognized as a prince of G-d - not merely a prince among men. He

represented Hashem. He was the embodiment of what a Jew should be. The Torah says in Devarim 28:10, "Then all the peoples of the earth shall see that the Name of Hashem is proclaimed over you, and they will fear/revere you." The fear that people harbor is a reference to awe. A Jew should reflect to the world that he is on a mission, representing the Almighty, and this should engender a feeling of awe and respect in the mind of those with whom he comes in contact. Precisely because this is a Jew's function in the world, it is even more tragic when we act inappropriately, thereby casting a pall over the collective Jewish name, and, by extension, Hashem.

As His representatives, we have a noble mission. Our positive actions will have a like effect. Regrettably, when a Jew acts in a negative manner, the ensuing effect parallels the action. We live in a time when the Jewish name has been smeared and branded ignominiously due to the ignoble behavior of a few. The world out there is certainly not offering plaudits to observant Jewry. They quickly grasp every opportunity that they have to denigrate our beliefs and demeanor. Why should we add fuel to the fire? It is, therefore, incumbent upon us to publicize every instance when a Jew acts like a Nesi Elokim, prince of G-d, a man on a mission for the Almighty.

I had occasion recently to hear a poignant story from my brother-in-law, who directs the Chevra Kaddisha, Jewish Sacred Burial Society, in Chicago. Sadly, the story begins with a tragedy, the sudden passing of a young man in a car accident. Apparently, the deceased worked as a mashgiach in a nearby state and was killed in a head-on collision. When the state troopers called his parents, they, in turn, called my brother-in-law, Rabbi Shaya Abramowitz, who called another one of the volunteers, and they traveled with the parents to identify and retrieve the body.

It took a few hours, and they arrived in a small hamlet far off the beaten path, in the middle of the night. The man who greeted them was the town's doctor, EMT and undertaker. Regrettably, tonight he had served in all three of his varied capacities. He related to my brother-in-law that, as an EMT, he was the first person on the scene. After efforts to administer life-saving aid had failed, he became the undertaker, informing all those at the scene that every drop of blood must be saved and the utmost reverence given to the body. He was acutely aware of the respect paid to the Jewish body after death and was even knowledgeable about some of the laws.

My brother-in-law was dumbfounded. The man was clearly not Jewish. How did he know so much, and why did he manifest such respect? The doctor explained that when he arrived at the scene and saw the tzitzis hanging out from beneath the shirt of the deceased, he immediately knew that the victim was Jewish. He immediately recalled all of his knowledge about Jews and the laws involving death and care of the body. It seems that when he was growing up on a farm in the rural part of the state, his family had a Jewish salesman who would come by and visit. He was especially nice and would often talk about Jewish laws and customs. Among the many interesting bits of information were the laws concerning a Jewish body. The young boy was fascinated, and it remained with him as he grew into adulthood. He remembered, because he respected the Jew that had visited with them - and, many years later, on a sad, winter night, he put his acquired knowledge to good use. All of this because the Jew whom he met was a Nesi Elokim.

A Rosh Yeshivah - or anyone who holds a leadership role in the Jewish spiritual dimension - represents the Nesi Elokim concept, both in stature and spirituality. As a Torah leader, he is viewed as the primary example of gadlus, greatness, both in Torah and in spiritual leadership. One individual whose erudition, bearing, demeanor and mesiras nefesh, devotion and self-sacrifice to Klal Yisrael, exemplified his role as Hashem's emissary to this world was Horav Avraham Kalmanowitz, zl. As the founding Rosh Yeshivah of Mir, New York, in 1941, he was instrumental in saving many members of the Yeshivah community from extermination. Indeed, he played a pivotal role in saving the lives of many European Jews. Joseph J. Schwartz, who was chairman of the European counsel of the Joint Distribution Committee once averred that in the Vaad Hatzala/Relief and Rescue Committee, "there was a rabbi (Kalmanowitz) with a long white beard, who, when he cried, even the State Department listened."

Congressman Emanuel Celler was initially opposed to rescue. It was just not an "American thing." By the time Celler realized that he was part of a

government that was unwilling to work to save the Jews of Europe, it was too late. Too many had already died. He had placed too much faith in his President, something that our people often learn - too late.

In his memoirs, the congressman who later, as a result of the influence of the Rosh Yeshivah, became the prime mover in the successful transfer of the Shanghai Yeshivah after the war, writes the following tribute to Rav Kalmanowitz: "It is difficult to describe the frustration and helplessness which prevailed when streams of letters poured in from constituents asking for aid in saving a family member. There is one day, which is marked out from all others during this period... Into my office came an old rabbi; everything about him, his hat which he did not remove, his long black coat and patriarchal beard, the veined hands clutching a cane, these stand before me, even to this day. Trembling and enfeebled, he had traveled from Brooklyn to Washington to meet with his congressman. Not once did he seem conscious of his tears as he pleaded, 'Don't you see? Can't you see? Won't you see that there are millions - millions being killed? Can't we have some of them? Can't you, Mr. Congressman, do something?'"

"I tried explaining, but the rabbi insisted that it was nothing but excuses. I truly believed in my government. Yet, the rabbi kept interrupting me, striking his cane on the office floor, 'If six million cattle had been slaughtered,' he cried, 'there would have been greater interest. A way would have been found. These are people!' he said. 'People.'

This was the impression that a Rosh Yeshivah imparted. It was sincere, it was true; it was real. He was a Nesi Elokim.

**Then Lavan and Besuel answered and said, "The matter stemmed from Hashem." (24:50)**

The Rashba asserts that, although the statement which affirms that Hashem guides a matrimonial relationship, ordaining two people as mates, originates from Lavan and Besuel, hardly individuals whom we quote in a positive manner, the Torah quotes their comment because it rings true. Mei'Hashem yatza ha'davar is the catchphrase for what we refer to as bashert, predetermined one. We firmly believe that Hashem ordains every match and guides it to fruition. One who approaches a relationship knowing that he is playing a leading role in G-d's plan will have a different set of goals and objectives in mind, as he plays his role in seeing this relationship continue on to matrimony.

I think that we should go one step further. Mei Hashem yatza ha'davar defines how one should relate to his spouse and vice versa. When a person is acutely aware that he is part of G-d's plan, everything that he does is carried out in the most selfless manner. This is my wife because Hashem has designated her to me. How I treat her is part of my avodas Hashem, service to the Almighty. If more of us would adopt this perspective and incorporate it into our relationship, it would engender positive results.

A successful marriage is one in which both parties contribute equally, knowing up front that from now on every decision is about "us", not "me." One who is fixated on satisfying his personal needs is destined to have problems in his relationship. Family life is the primer for refining one's character traits. It is a classroom which provides a constant educational experience.

The very first blessing of the Sheva Berachos, seven-wedding blessings, is shehakol bara lichvodo, "Who has created everything for His Glory." Interestingly, the chosson, groom, is not mentioned. Neither is the kallah, bride. In fact, marriage is not even mentioned. Why then should this blessing be included among the wedding blessings? Indeed, why is it the first one? What connection is there between this brachah and the marriage ceremony?

Rabbi Dr. A. Twerski suggests that this blessing is placed first to underscore the definition of Jewish marriage. When a husband and wife, standing beneath the chupah, marriage canopy, understand the raison d'être of marriage upfront, if they realize that marriage is not for self-gratification, but rather, for the glorification of Hashem's Name, the marriage works. It has positive results. One must be aware from the get-go, Shehakol barah lichvodo, "Who has created everything for His Glory." One should not be in a relationship to satisfy himself, but to play a role in glorifying Hashem. When a marriage is good, it brings honor to Heaven, and when a marriage is a disaster, it engenders negative results for Heaven. The determining factor of a good marriage should be: Is it good for

Heaven? Does this relationship glorify the Name of Hashem? So many of the issues in a marriage can be resolved when we apply this barometer.

Rabbi Twerski, quoted by Rabbi Yissachar Frand, cites two poignant stories which illustrate this idea. While it is true that both of these stories occurred concerning gedolim, Torah giants, it is something from which we can and should take an example. Furthermore, I think their uncommon selflessness clearly added to their gadlus, distinction. Regrettably, since we live in a time when thinking of oneself is in vogue, and demanding kavod, honor, is part and parcel of the insecure, it is truly refreshing to hear such stories.

Horav Yaakov Kamenetsky, zl, was at a wedding and needed a ride back to Monsey. A single fellow was asked if he would mind giving the revered Rosh Yeshivah a ride. It was a rhetorical question, because who would not jump at the opportunity to spend an hour or two of quality time with Rav Yaakov? The Rosh Yeshivah, however, asked the young man if he could look over his car. The young man, somewhat in a quandary, escorted Rav Yaakov to his car, who then proceeded to open the back door and sit down in the back seat for a few moments. He then emerged from the car, shut the backdoor, and said, "I will be happy to travel with you to Monsey."

One can imagine what thoughts were coursing through the young man's mind. Clearly, the Rosh Yeshivah's behavior was unusual. Rav Yaakov probably noticed the dumbfounded look on the young man's face, and he explained, "My rebbetzin will be joining us. She will be sitting in the back seat. I had to be certain that she would be comfortable. Therefore, I tried out the seat and deemed it suitable for her." Rav Yaakov was not concerned with the make or status of the car, just if it would provide a comfortable ride for his wife.

The next story presents an even greater expression of selflessness. The Milwaukee Rebbe, Horav Yaakov Yisrael Twerski, zl, passed away shortly after being diagnosed with a dread terminal illness. After the doctor had more or less delivered his death sentence, the Rebbe called in his son, R' Avraham Shia, who is also a medical doctor, to discuss his options for treatment. He said, "They want to give me chemotherapy. It will probably not work and only prolong the inevitable for a very short time. In addition, it will cause me great pain and suffering." His son agreed. "I think since I have very little, if anything, to gain, and so much to lose, that I will not agree to have the therapy." His son felt that this was a wise decision and that they should immediately share this with the doctor.

While this conversation was going on, the Rebbetzin was in the hall talking with the doctor regarding her husband's prognosis and treatment options. She asked if treatment would help prolong his life. The doctor replied that, in his estimation, a few months was a possibility. She said, "If it will give my husband a few months - even if it gives him a few extra days - we want it!"

The Rebbetzin came into the room and notified her husband that the doctor felt that chemotherapy would help for a few months and "I want you to have it." She then proceeded to walk out of the room.

The Rebbe turned to his son and said, "We both know that the therapy will not help. It will not give me the promised two months, and we both know that. As a result, I will be in excruciating pain, but, if I do not take the therapy, your mother will be guilt-ridden for the rest of her life. Therefore, I will take it, so that she will not feel bad." He took the therapy and suffered great pain, all because he wanted to spare his wife the guilt often associated with survivors: "If only I had done more, or insisted on therapy." He taught us the meaning of selflessness.

**Yitzchak went out to supplicate in the field towards evening. (24:63)**

Chazal tell us that Yitzchak Avinu was mesakein, instituted, Tefillas Minchah, Afternoon prayer. His father, Avraham Avinu, was mesakein Tefillas Shacharis, Morning prayer, and Yaakov Avinu initiated Tefillas Arvis, Evening prayer. Clearly, their respective and individual life struggles had an impact on the tefillah which they ushered in, each tefillah implying an important lesson on life and how to cope with adversity. Horav Shlomo Yosef Zevin, zl, has a practical understanding of the difference between their tefillos, in light of the time of day when they are expressed. There is a powerful lesson to be derived from Tefillas Minchah, which carries enormous significance for the petitioner.

Let us focus on the time of day when each of these prayers is recited. Shacharis takes place in the morning, a time when, for all intents and purposes, one is beginning his day after a restful night's sleep. The day, with its various challenges, has not yet begun. His mind is relaxed. Thus, he is able to pray with complete devotion; nothing is disturbing him; his heart is focused on Hashem. The evening service is recited at day's end. It matters not if it had been a good day or a bad one. The main thing is that it is over. One cannot change what occurred. His successes and failures are behind him. The prayer he recites at this point is communicated with a sort of passivity, calm in knowledge that the day is over. His davening to Hashem can be with the proper kavanah, intention, expressing his emotions with unabashed fervor.

Tefillas Minchah is different. It is recited right in the middle of the day, often in middle of work, requiring time off from a meeting, an important phone call, or a tense project. The individual steals himself away from what presently occupies him, to collect his thoughts and focus on Hashem, as he supplicates His favor. Minchah is often rendered amid turmoil, at times in a makeshift shul, an office, a dining room, a field. How difficult it is to maintain proper kavanah for Tefillas Minchah. This is why Chazal in Meseches Berachos 6b say, "One should expend great care with Tefillas Minchah." It is the tefillah for which it is most difficult to retain proper kavanah.

The symbol of life's endeavor in the arena of materialism is the field. Working in the field is the expression that conveys the message emanating involvement in matters pertaining to olam hazeh, this physical world. In historic times, man's endeavor revolved around plowing, planting, digging, weeding, harvesting, grinding the wheat, etc. Life's focus was the field. It was the primary source of one's parnassah, livelihood. Yitzchak instituted Minchah in the field, in the middle of his "work," to underscore the need for clearing out the cobwebs in one's mind in order to focus properly on the prayer at hand.

Perhaps we may add to this idea. The Torah records the end of the life of Moshe Rabbeinu, his final few hours, as Vayeilach Moshe, "Moshe went" (Devarim 31:1). The genesis of the Jewish "movement" begins with Hashem's command to Avraham Avinu, Lech Lecha, "Go for yourself" (Bereishis 12:1). The Torah begins with Lech lecha and ends with Vayeilech. It almost seems as if Avraham began with forward movement, and Moshe ended with moving/going forward. Moshe continued where Avraham left off - and continued "going" until his heart ceased to pulsate. "Going" is a Jewish concept. The Torah demands halichah, movement, as an end in itself - not merely a means of getting someplace. We are commanded to move - not to arrive. The results of our forward/upward movement, the consequences of our endeavors, should not be the focus of our thoughts. Our function is in doing - Hashem will arrange the results. We are holeich bidrachav, go in his His ways. We are rewarded for the toil which we expend - not the achievement.

We often ask, or we are asked: "How are you doing?" The truth of the matter is that "how" we are doing is unimportant. What is important is that we "are" doing. Sitting around passively is sinful. A Jew must constantly move forward and keep on "doing." Shacharis is the prayer one recites before he begins "doing"; Maariv is recited at the end of the day when one has paused to rest from his "doing." Minchah is recited right in the thick of things, when the Jew is being a holeich, "going." In the midst of his endeavoring he pauses to pray - so that he may continue moving forward. Minchah pays gratitude to Hashem for having been allowed to reach this point, and, at the same time, supplicates Him for the ability to continue moving forward. It is the tefillah that underscores the Jew's halichah.

#### **Va'ani Tefillah**

**HaNosein sheleg katzamer, kefor ka'eifer yefazer, mashlich karcho cheftim.**

**He places the snow as wool; He spreads the frost like ashes; He throws down His ice like little pieces.**

Many of us determine a blessing, a gift, in accordance with how it initially affects us. Most often, we do not take time to think, to rationalize if perhaps that which appears to our limited minds as something injurious is actually of great benefit - both physically and spiritually. What a blessing we have in snow. Imagine if the frozen water vapor within the clouds were

to descend all at once. It would destroy everything in sight. Hashem is kind to us by breaking the ice into little particles known as snow, ice and rain. Some of us sadly endure different forms of adversity, often with no letup or reprieve between one another. We wonder why. Why so much? Why so often? When we think about it, if Hashem would have sent it all at one time, we would be devastated. It would be almost impossible to handle. The manner in which Hashem sends what appears on the surface to be serious punishment is in itself a chesed, act of kindness. What seems to be harmful is actually the greatest benefit.

Horav Avigdor Miller, zl, notes that the cold of winter allows for the soil to regenerate itself during the time that it lies fallow. In addition, the winter deprives many of the opportunity for extensive travel and work and play outdoors. This is essentially for our spiritual welfare. Now that we are deprived of the great outdoors, we have more time to study Torah - alone and with our children. Winter really is not so "bad" after all. It all depends on one's perspective.

Sponsored in loving memory of our father and grandfather Eliyahu ben Yaakov z"l niftar 3 Cheshvan 5756

by Dr. & Mrs. Jacob Massuda

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### **Rabbi Yissocher Frand on Parshas Chayei Sarah Being On Guard For the Satan Behind Us**

Sarah is the only one of our Matriarchs whose age at the time of her passing is documented in the Torah. We are explicitly told the age of each Patriarch at the time of their death, but only Sarah has this distinction among the Matriarchs. The Torah tells us at the beginning of the Parsha that she died at the age of 127. What is the significance of this distinction? Furthermore, the pasuk [verse] documenting Sarah's age strikes us as being redundant: "Sarah's lifetime was one hundred years, and twenty years, and seven years; the years of Sarah's life." [Bereshis 23:1] The next pasuk goes on to say that "Avraham came to mourn for Sarah and to cry for her." According to ancient tradition, the letter chaf in the word Livkosa [to cry for her] is written small. The Baal HaTurim explains that the reason the letter is diminished in size is that since Sarah lived to such a ripe old age, Avraham Avinu minimized the amount of crying he did for her. According to the Baal H aTurim, it did not suffice for us to surmise on our own that since Sarah was 127 years old when she died, it was probably not such a tragic funeral that inspired a great deal of crying. For some reason, it was important for the Torah to explicitly make note of this fact (by use of the diminished letter chaf). Why is this so significant for us to know?

The Nesivos Shalom (the Slonimer Rebbe) writes the following idea in his sefer. Every night we say in the Mariv prayer: "Remove the Satan from in front of us and from behind us". It is obvious to all of us what the purpose of the "Satan in front of us" is. Many times, we are on the way to do something positive and we find it becomes very difficult to accomplish the task. This is due to the "Satan in front of us" who tries to prevent us from doing mitzvos. We do not have to search any further than last week's parsha (Vayera) for an example. Chazal tell us that the Satan wanted to get in the way of Avraham Avinu and not let him accomplish the Akeidah [binding] of Yitzchak.

But what is the significance of the prayer to remove the "Satan from behind us"? How can there be a "Satan behind us" if the mitzvah has already been completed? The Nesivos Shalom explains that sometimes after we have already completed a mitzvah, or passed a nisayon [spiritual challenge] things don't work out the way we thought they would and we begin to "second guess" our righteous acts. We wonder whether or not we did the right thing. The Satan never gives up. He may lose battle after battle, but he does not give up the war so easily.

I have heard more than once cases of highly successful individuals who originally were not observant and decided to become Baalei Teshuva and fully Sabbath observant and then subsequently their business tanked. It creeps up in people's minds: Why is it that when the person was non-religious everything he touched turned to gold and now that he is religious, everything he touches turns to dust?

What does the person think? What do the people around him think? This is the idea of "Remove Satan from behind us." After the good deed is done, the Satan does not want you to be at peace with it. Even if the person was not contemplating going back to where he came from spiritually, nonetheless, it is no longer the same. It is with a regret and remorse that one decided to do the right thing and become religious.

Our parshios, the Nesivos Shalom explains, contain a classic example of Avraham Avinu facing the Satan in front of him in Parshas Vayera and then confronting the Satan in back of him in Parshas Chayei Sarah. The Satan behind him is, as Rashi says (based on the Medrash), that Sarah died suddenly out of the shock of hearing that her son Yitzchak was almost slaughtered. This scenario was an act of the Satan. Sarah was supposed to die in any event, no matter what happened. But the Satan arranged that someone would come to her door and tell her about the Akeida and just at that moment, she would die. Everyone, including Avraham, could come to the false conclusion and say "This is what I get for the Akeida?"

The Satan knows that she would have died at that time regardless of whether or not the Akeida took place. It was not the news of the Akeida that killed her, it was G-d's having said that these are the days of her years. Her time was up. That is why, says the Slonimer Rebbe, the Torah writes "one hundred years and twenty years and seven years." This is why the Torah spells out the age of her death - so that we should not for a minute think that she died prematurely because of the Akeidah. That is why the Torah reiterates "the years of the life of Sarah". When Sarah was born, she was given a certain amount of years and a certain amount of days and on a specific day and in a specific place and a specific time she was destined to die.

Many times we have an elderly parent living with one child and then they decide to move the parent to another child and then the parent dies. There are typically all sorts of guilty feelings. 'If this, if that', etc. No! Everyone has their time and place where they are going to die.

This is the way it was with Sarah. No one appreciated this more than Avraham Avinu. That is why the word Livkosa [to cry for her] has a small chaf. There was not a tremendous amount of crying because this was not the case of a tragic sudden unexpected death, which causes people to cry. The Torah wants to record for us that the crying was muted, because it was part of the natural life cycle destined for Sarah to die at this ripe old age of 127.

This teaches us that we must always be on guard, not only for the Satan in front of us, but for the Satan behind us as well.

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD

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## Parshas Chayei Sarah: Public Offerings

Matzav.com

By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Let's talk business. After all, Avrohom Avinu did.

This week's parsha opens as a grieving Avrohom Avinu comes to eulogize, cry for, and bury his beloved wife of many decades, Sarah. Avrohom Avinu approaches the Hittite family of Efron and the first recorded acquisition in the Torah is thus detailed. In fact, so much credence is given to the technicalities of this transaction that the Talmud derives quite a bit of commerce law from it. I would like to analyze the human side of the deal. Let us examine the story.

Avrohom Avinu approaches the children of Heth to purchase land in which to bury Sarah. He declares to them, "I am an alien and a resident. Please grant me an estate for a burial site with you that I may bury my dead from before me." (Bereishis 23: 4) The children of Heth answered Avrohom Avinu in a very warm and enthusiastic manner. They say to him: "My lord, you are a prince of G-d in our midst: In the choicest of our burial places bury your dead, no one will withhold his burial place from you. from burying your dead." Avrohom Avinu requests to be presented to Efron the son of Zohar. He appeals, "let him grant me the cave which is his on the edge of his field for its full price in your midst, as an estate for a burial

site." Efron responded to Avrohom Avinu in full view and earshot "of all the children of Heth." He openly declares, "No, my lord, listen carefully! I have given you the field, and as for the cave I have given it to you in front of all the children of Heth!" (Ibid:11)

Avrohom Avinu responds graciously. "I would truly like to pay for the field and the cave in order to bury my dead."

Immediately there is a change of direction. Efron declares, "land worth 400 silver shekels in negotiable currency, between me and you — what is it? Bury your dead." Avrohom Avinu pays the full amount and buries Sarah.

It's hard to help but notice an extreme change in attitude. At first, Efron, speaking for all the children of Heth to hear, grandstands as if he was giving the land and cave as a magnanimous gift to Avrohom Avinu. As soon as the conversation shifts more intimately, he changes his tune. When the moment of truth draws near, he uses the words "between me and you" and his altruism disappears. Suddenly he sets a price of 400 silver coins for the property and he calls that sum, "no big deal!" In truth, the Talmud in Bava Metzia evaluates "negotiable currency" as 2500 times the value of a regular silver shekel. Thus Avrohom Avinu paid 1 million silver pieces for land that was originally, publicly "offered" as a gift!

The local Russian party-leader was being interviewed by a naive reporter who was reporting on the virtues of the communist system. "Sir," went the first question, "what would you do if you were to own two homes?" The official beamed as he responded with a broad smile, "I'd give one of them away to my comrades!" "And what would you do if you owned two automobiles?" Again the answer was given, with a smug certainty, "I would give one of the cars to my comrades!" "And the final question," the reporter asked innocently, what would you do if you owned two overcoats?" The official began to stammer and stutter. "What's the matter?" asked the reporter. The official quietly mumbled under his breath, "you shouldn't ask that to me! You see, I own two coats!"

People have a tendency to make generous offers for all to hear. However, when it comes to actually following through, their attitude changes. The conversation shifts "between me and you" and only an Avrohom Avinu is there to hear it. What was once offered as a generous gift receives a hefty price-tag of 400 silver shekel. Efron is forever known as the big talker who reneges on his offer as he capitalizes on Avrohom Avinu's graciousness. The flaw was not only in Efron's character, but in the setting that accompanied it. A public commitment or announcement tends to change dramatically when it becomes just — between you and me!

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## Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski

TorahWeb Foundation

Marriage that Endures

Historically, the family has been considered the basic unit of society. Certainly in Judaism, the strength of the mishpacha is said to be a major factor in Jewish survival. In the general population, the family has suffered serious casualties. One out of three children in the US lives in a single parent home. The statistics in the Jewish population are not as grim, but whereas divorce used to be a rarity, it is now commonplace, and the fragility of the family unit certainly has an effect on the children.

Many relationships begin with two people falling in love. While this seems to be perfectly logical, listen to what George Bernard Shaw said: "When two people are under the influence of the most violent, most insane, most illusive, and most transient of passions, they are required to swear that they will remain in that excited, abnormal, and exhausting condition continuously until death do them part." Even if they do not take a formal oath to that effect, they probably believe that their passion will be eternal.

Of course, love is essential to a marriage, but see what the Torah says about the marriage of Yitzhak to Rivka, "He married Rivka, she became his wife, and he loved her" (Breishis 24:67). Look carefully at the sequence of the words. Yitzhak's love for Rivka developed after the marriage rather than before it.

Abraham's servant, Eliezer, who was sent to find a wife for Yitzhak, watched for a young woman who championed chesed (acts of kindness).

“Let it be the maiden to whom I shall say, ‘Please tip over your jug so I may drink,’ and who replies, ‘Drink, and I will even water your camels,’ her will You have designated for Yitzchak.” The basis for the relationship was a commonality of values, not “the most violent, most insane, most illusive, and most transient of passions.” This was a relationship in which true love could develop.

The Talmud says that the relationship of a husband to his wife should be “to love her as much as he loves himself, and to respect her even more than he respects himself” (Yevamos 62b). It is of interest that Rambam, in citing the Talmud, reverses the order and places respect before love. Why? Because it is unrealistic to expect that one can have so intense a love from day one. It takes time for true love to develop. However, respect is something that can begin on day one.

Of course there is passion in a marriage, but Shaw was right. A marriage based on passion is on a fragile foundation. The mutual love and respect for one another that develop after the marriage is the cement that can bond the couple throughout their entire lives.

It is, of course, essential that each partner should behave in a manner that is conducive to the development of love and respect. The formula for this is simple, albeit not easy. It is Rambam’s version of the Talmud, “to respect her even more than he respects himself, and to love her as much as he loves himself.” Rambam continues that the wife’s attitude toward the husband should be similar, to honor him and fulfill his wishes. Having first established that the husband must respect his wife, it is obvious that his wishes will not encroach on his consideration of and respect for her.

The Jewish family is now at greater risk than ever before. The Torah teaching about marriage can be our salvation.

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**Haaretz.com,**  
**Portion of the Week / A delicate dance**  
**By Benjamin Lau**

The first encounter between Isaac and Rebecca takes place in the open. The Torah tells us, "And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming" (Genesis 24:63). Although he sees the caravan, he does not notice his "intended," atop one of the camels. However, she immediately notices him: "And Rebecca lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a veil, and covered herself" (Gen. 24:64-65).

This is the first time the Bible mentions a woman covering her face with a veil. Nachmanides' explanation is that Rebecca "is complying with the moral code of women, whose behavior conforms to the rules of modesty."

In light of the custom in Muslim cultures of women concealing their faces, Nachmanides' interpretation may indeed be credible. This custom has recently spread among Muslim communities in Israel, and appears to be an extreme form of protest against female nudity in advertisements, movies, etc. The explanations for this growing phenomenon are generally linked to issues of sexuality and modesty. In general, the act of concealment is intended to prevent men who are not relations from looking at a woman's face.

Another interpretation of Rebecca's action comes from the realm of psychology: that hiding her face reflects remoteness, perhaps even alienation. Although the Torah attests to her love for Isaac, perhaps at this moment Rebecca does not want to engage in any overt contact with him. She has just been uprooted from her family home and must acclimate herself to life in a stranger's tent, and under the specter of her recently deceased mother-in-law, Sarah.

Hagit Rappel (in "Dirshuni: Midreshei Nashim," a book of Bible commentaries written by women) writes: "Rebecca lowers herself to the ground, dons a veil and covers her face, establishing a barrier between herself and her husband ... Although she comforts Isaac over the loss of his mother, there is no one present who can comfort Rebecca."

However, upon closer reflection, this may not be a correct interpretation. It turns out that such an act of concealment is mentioned elsewhere in the Bible - with regard to Tamar, who seduces her father-in-law, Judah, when he refuses to grant his third son to her in matrimony: "And it was told Tamar, saying, Behold thy father-in-law goeth up to Timnath to shear his sheep. And she put her widow's garments off from her, and covered her with a veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place, which is by the way to Timnath; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given unto him to wife" (Gen. 38:13-14).

The midrashic literature draws our attention to the connection between Rebecca and Tamar, and to the similar results of their actions: "Both women cover their faces with a veil and both give birth to twins" (Bereisheet Rabbah). In Tamar's case, the matter is quite straightforward: She hides her face as part of her disguise as a prostitute. Indeed, were it not for the veil, Judah would never have dreamed of going near her, since he declared that she was to be his third son's wife. Tamar's removal of her widow's clothes and donning of the veil enable the ruse to work: She thus succeeds in becoming "invisible" and in manipulating herself and her victim - the unsuspecting Judah - according to her own whims.

The prophet Isaiah is familiar with women's use of the veil to disguise themselves. In his harsh criticism of those who try to tempt men with their charms, he declares: "Moreover the Lord saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet ... In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon, the chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers" (3:16-19). Here, the veil is part of the "ammunition" women use against men; husbands will thus have no idea that their wives are apparently seducing whomever they desire.

Tel Aviv University historian Prof. Billie Melman describes the encounter between Western and Oriental women in the 19th century thus: "It is easy to see that they [Ottoman women] enjoyed a greater degree of liberty than we do. No woman, regardless of her social standing, can walk in the street without two thin sheets of cloth ... one covering her face and the other wrapped around her body. This outfit gives them the freedom to walk wherever their natural tendencies lead them."

Following this line of thinking, we can interpret Rebecca's concealment of her face neither as an act of modesty, nor as an expression of emotional disengagement, but rather as an intimate gesture. A gesture that embodies a subtle invitation to an encounter, to developing a relationship.

In accordance with this explanation, furthermore, we can better understand an ancient Jewish wedding custom. Before the bride goes under the canopy, the bridegroom covers her face with a veil. In every ethnic community in the Jewish world, this act of concealment is performed differently; however, in all cases, it is a dramatic act. Apparently, the custom can be traced back to Rebecca's decision to wear a veil. In hiding herself, she is actually inviting Isaac to discover her secret. Indeed, we find an allusion to Rebecca's intention in a midrash on the verse, in the Song of Songs: "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits" (4:16).

There is no suppression here, no barrier between the souls of the two persons in question. Instead, there is a delicate dance intended to link a man and a woman without any need for words, but with great, heartfelt motivation.

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**Rav Kook List**  
**Rav Kook on the Torah Portion**  
**Prayer: The Torah of Rashbi**

Amazingly enough, not everyone needs to pray:

"Those whose full-time occupation is learning Torah, such as Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai and his colleagues, should interrupt their studies to recite the Shema but not for the Amidah prayer." [Shulchan Aruch OC 106:2, based on Shabbat 11a]

This statement is quite surprising. Does not prayer fulfill a basic spiritual need? True, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai was a great scholar who completely

immersed himself in Torah study - but why should he be exempt from prayer?

Rav Kook's explanation in Olat Re'iyah helps us understand the function of prayer and the mechanics of its role in our spiritual growth.

#### Theoretical and Practical

The Sages used an interesting phrase to describe full-time Torah scholars: 'their Torah is their umanut' - their art or craft. In what way is Torah study likened to a craft?

A craft is a skill based on specialized wisdom and knowledge. However, it is not enough just to learn the theory. The craftsman also needs practical training in order to perfect his art.

However, there are unusual individuals who are so talented that they fall under the category of one who 'just sees an art and acquires the skill.' Using only their mental powers, they are able to acquire the necessary practical skill. One example of such a gifted artist was Betzalel. He was blessed with a unique Divine spirit that enabled him to create all of the beautiful and intricate Tabernacle vessels solely on the basis of their theoretical specifications, without needing to resort to apprenticeship and experimentation.

#### The Art of Torah

The Torah may also be described as a theoretical wisdom that needs to be actualized on a practical level. It is not enough just to study about kindness and integrity and holiness. The basis for our good deeds and holy service is when we succeed in integrating the highest perceptions of Divine ideals into our lives.

It is precisely in this transformation from theory to practice that prayer plays a crucial role. Prayer reaches out to our emotions and feelings. Because our emotions have closer ties to our actions than abstract thought, prayer enables us to realize our ethical principles in our day-to-day lives. Our prayers for enlightenment, forgiveness, redemption, and so on, awaken deep yearnings for these eternal values. Prayer softens the heart and prepares us to actualize those concepts of morality and holiness acquired in Torah study. Through earnest prayer we gain a practical readiness and become skilled artists of kindness and integrity.

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, however, was a special case. His absorption of Torah was profound and all-encompassing. The impact of his Torah studies was so powerful, and he was so innately attuned to internalize every teaching of holiness and goodness, that he did not need prayer in order to refine his emotions. His Torah study alone was enough to stamp its spiritual images deeply on his heart and soul. He was like the gifted individual who 'just sees an art and acquires the skill.' Rabbi Shimon was gifted in his Torah study like Betzalel was blessed in his craftsmanship.

For this reason, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and scholars like him are exempt from prayer. Their Torah study alone is enough to serve as the foundation for the practical application of their 'craft.'

[Adapted from Olat Re'iyah vol. I intro., pp. 21-22]

Comments and inquiries may be sent to: RavKookList@gmail.com



**Ma'arat HaMachpela: Jewish Roots**  
**Cheshvan 25, 5770, 12 November 09**  
**by David Wilder (Israelnationalnews.com)**

The Torah teaches us that Avraham, sitting outside his tent following his Brit Milah perhaps the calf had run inside. Arriving at the cave and peering in, Avraham saw a bright light glowing from deep within. Entering to investigate, walking deeper and deeper into the cave, Avraham discovered the tombs of Adam and Eve, the first man and woman. He also smelled fragrances from the Garden of Eden.

How did Adam and Eve arrive at this site? It is written that following their exile from the Garden of Eden they wished to return, but they had no idea where it was. They searched and searched until they reached a point where they could smell the exquisite fragrances of that unique place. There, the first man began digging and dug a cave within a cave, until a voice from

the heavens forbade him to dig further. There he buried his wife Eve and later he too was interred there (according to the Zohar).

Realizing the sanctity of the site, Avraham left the cave, desiring to purchase it. According to the Midrash (Pirkei d'Rebbi Eliezer), he approached the Jebusites and requested to purchase from them the cave. (The Midrash specifies that the Jebusites and the Hittites were both from the same tribe, Paleshet.) They answered Avraham, "We know that your future offspring will try to conquer our home city (Jerusalem). If you agree to prevent them from conquering Jerusalem, we will sell you the cave."

Avraham agreed and signed a contract which was hung on statues outside the gates of Jerusalem. There are commentators who hold that Joshua did not conquer Jerusalem when he entered Israel due to Avraham's agreement. Centuries later, King David purchased the Temple Mount from the Jebusites only after he destroyed these statues.

Did Avraham really agree to relinquish Jerusalem for Hebron? No. Avraham realized that in order to attain the sanctity of Jerusalem, it was necessary to begin at the foundations of civilization, at the point which joins this world to another world, to the Garden of Eden. Starting here, at the cave, the foundations of the world, they could then progress slowly, until finally reaching the holiness of Jerusalem. This is similar to "Jacob's ladder", of which it is written that the top of the ladder reached the heavens but the legs of the ladder were firmly entrenched on the ground.

Where is a connection between Jerusalem and Hebron, site of these caves discovered by Avraham, called Ma'arat HaMachpela? The Talmud says, in the tractate Yoma, that every day, before beginning work in the Beit HaMikdash, the Temple, the priests would look out and ask, "Has the sun yet risen in the east, even as far as Hebron?" If the answer was positive, work would commence. If not, if it was still dark in Hebron, the priests in Jerusalem would have to wait.

Very likely, the merit by which Avraham earned discovery of Ma'arat HaMachpela is due to his desire and willingness to fulfill the positive precept of hachnasat orchim, "hosting guests", despite the very hot weather and the pain he experienced three days after his Brit Milah. This reflects Avraham's primary trait, that of chesed, or total, unrelenting loving-kindness.

Where did Avraham learn the trait of chesed? It would seem, from HaShem, from G-d Himself. In our prayers, which we repeat three times daily, we say, "the great, strong, awesome G-d, the supreme G-d." What would we expect to follow? Perhaps, 'the G-d who created heavens and earth', or 'who created Man'? No. We continue, "[G-d] who practices fine chesed and remembers the chesed of the Forefathers." This is what Avraham learned from HaShem. And this is the pillar of Ma'arat HaMachpela - chesed.

This is Avraham's primary trait, that of chesed, as it is written, "He bestowed chesed to Avraham." Why especially to Avraham? It is written, "A world of chesed will be created." In other words, creation of the world was dependant on total chesed, without any restrictions. Later, rules were established and the chesed was limited, borders were implemented. (So it is that Yitzhak's trait is gevurah, which represents the ability to live with restrictions, an enclosing, an implementation of constraints, and the opposite of chesed.)

Why was Avraham's trait

In the Torah it is written (in Hebrew) Ma'arat Sde HaMachpela ("the cave in the field of Machpela"). The initials of these three words (in Hebrew), Mem, Shin and Hay, combine to spell Moshe. Jerusalem and Hebron blend and unify. Torah - the rules, the boundaries - and the tablets of the Ten Commandments, are found in Jerusalem. Gevurah - the trait of Yitzhak; Akedat Yitzhak occurred on Har HaMoriah, site of Beit HaMikdash.

The chesed, the full loving-kindness without restriction, the trait of Avraham, is in Hebron. The lights of Hebron and the lights of Jerusalem merge to create a unity of spirituality which imbues the Jewish people (Ya'akov-Yisrael - the unity of chesed and gevurah), the revealed and the hidden, this is the secret of Ma'arat HaMachpela, a unity which cannot be, and never will be, 'disengaged'.

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**Weekly Halacha – Chayei Sarah**  
**Rabbi Neustadt Doniel**  
**Chazaras ha-Shatz: What For?**

Until modern times, the accepted norm was for all Jewish men to daven in shul three times a day. Even the *amei ha-aretz*, the people who were not able to daven on their own, were careful to meet their twice-a-day obligation to recite *Kerias Shema* and its blessings, and to daven *Shemoneh Esrei* during the morning and afternoon services. To assist the *amei ha-aretz* with their davening, the *sheliach tzibur* was instructed to recite the parts of the service which were not commonly known by heart in a loud and clear voice, so that everyone would be able to hear every single word. Indeed, even those who were able to daven on their own did not bother to do so, since they were able to satisfy their obligation by listening to the *sheliach tzibur* and concentrating on his words.

When it came to *Shemoneh Esrei*, however, this system proved inadequate. The Rabbis did not want the people who were able to daven on their own to fulfill their obligation of *Shemoneh Esrei* by merely listening to the *sheliach tzibur*; *Shemoneh Esrei* is an intensely personal encounter with Hashem where one throws himself at His mercy and entreats Him according to his unique situation and desires. Consequently, the Rabbis ruled that anyone who could recite *Shemoneh Esrei* on his own could not get by on the *sheliach tzibur*'s coattails, so to speak. But what to do with the *amei ha-aretz* who were unable to daven on their own? The solution was a new Rabbinic ordinance which stated that whenever a public prayer takes place, the *Shemoneh Esrei* must be repeated out loud for the benefit of those who cannot daven on their own.

It must be stressed, however, that even before this widely accepted ordinance was instituted, the *Shemoneh Esrei* was often repeated, sometimes completely and sometimes partially. Surely, whenever an illiterate person was spotted, the *sheliach tzibur* repeated the *Shemoneh Esrei* for his benefit. Even when there was no *am ha-aretz* present, the first three blessings of the *Shemoneh Esrei* were recited out loud in order for the congregation to be able to say *Kedushah*. In other communities the last part of the *Shemoneh Esrei*, too, was repeated, so that *Birkas Kohanim* could be recited. But it was not until this ordinance was established and implemented that it became mandatory for *Shemoneh Esrei* to be repeated in its entirety, regardless of the circumstances, even if an *am ha-aretz* was not spotted in the crowd.

It is for this reason that the Rambam rules that even nowadays when *amei ha-aretz* no longer frequent shuls and there is hardly anyone for whom to repeat the *Shemoneh Esrei*, we must still observe the ordinance. The Rambam explains that when the ordinance was enacted initially, it specifically included all situations – whether *amei ha-aretz* were present or not. The Rambam compares this ordinance to another one: the recitation of *Magen avos* on Friday night after *Shemoneh Esrei* for the benefit of those who come late. Once established, *Magen avos* is recited as a matter of course – whether or not there are latecomers. So, too, with *chazaras ha-shatz*; it is always recited regardless of the circumstances.

**The role of the sheliach tzibur**

An obvious question arises: Why did the Rabbis require the *sheliach tzibur* to daven twice – could he not stand by in silence while the congregation recites their silent *Shemoneh Esrei*? Does it not seem that his silent prayer is extraneous?

The Talmud answers that before the *sheliach tzibur* recites the *Shemoneh Esrei* in order to exempt the congregation, he should prepare exactly how he is going to say it. Thus his silent *Shemoneh Esrei* serves as a trial run for his “real” *Shemoneh Esrei* – the one that he will recite aloud for the benefit of the congregation.

It follows, therefore, that the nusach of the “trial” prayer be the same nusach as the “real” one; otherwise it is not much of a practice. For example, one who normally prays nusach Sephard but is serving as a *sheliach tzibur* for an Ashkenaz congregation must pray nusach Ashkenaz for his silent *Shemoneh Esrei* as well, since his silent prayer is actually only a practice run for his “real” *Shemoneh Esrei*.

A *sheliach tzibur* who made a mistake during his silent *Shemoneh Esrei* (e.g., he forgot *Ya'aleh v'Yavo* on *Chol ha-Moed*) does not need to repeat it; rather, he may rely on the *chazaras ha-shatz* which is his “real” *Shemoneh Esrei* anyway. [If this happened during the evening services, however, he must repeat the *Shemoneh Esrei* after *Aleinu*, except on Friday night, when he can rely on *Magen avos*.]

A *sheliach tzibur* who missed an earlier *tefillah* and needs to make it up may do so through his present *chazaras ha-shatz*. However, he must have in mind that his *chazaras ha-shatz* is serving a dual purpose.

**The role of the congregation**

*Shulchan Aruch* rules that at least nine people must listen intently to the entire *chazaras ha-shatz*. If not, the blessings that the *sheliach tzibur* repeats are “akin to blessings made in vain.”

The reason for this is based on our earlier explanation of *chazaras ha-shatz*. Nowadays, the main objective of *chazaras ha-shatz* is to fulfill the Rabbinic ordinance. But it is clear that the ordinance can be fulfilled only when a *minyán* is present and listening to the repetition of *Shemoneh Esrei*. If a *quorum* is not paying attention, then the *sheliach tzibur* is not meeting the terms of the ordinance and his blessings are being recited for no purpose. Because of the severity of this potential problem, *Shulchan Aruch* rules that every person should view himself as if he is one of only nine people paying attention to the repetition and that his undivided attention is essential for the *sheliach tzibur* to avoid reciting a blessing in vain. Thus it is highly improper for anyone to learn, recite *Tehillim* or make up parts of davening during *chazaras ha-shatz*, even if he attempts to pay attention and answer *amen* in the correct spots.

If it is improper to engage in other spiritual endeavors during *chazaras ha-shatz*, it is strictly forbidden to engage in mundane conversation during *chazaras ha-shatz*. *Shulchan Aruch* reserves uncharacteristically strong language for a person who does so. He is referred to as “a sinner” and as “one whose sin is too great to be forgiven.” The *poskim* report that “several shuls were destroyed on account of this sin.” In addition, conversing during *chazaras ha-shatz* causes *chillul Hashem*, since it unfortunately lends support to the widely held perception that non-Jews are more careful than Jews to maintain proper decorum in a house of worship.

1. *Shemoneh Esrei* of *Ma'ariv* was initially established as a voluntary prayer, and was not obligatory until a much later period in history.
2. *Pesukei d'Zimrah*, which consists of *Tehillim* which everyone knew by heart, and *Kerias Shema* itself, which was taught to every child, were not recited out loud by the *sheliach tzibur* but rather by each worshipper individually; see *Tur*, O.C. 49, *Shenos Eliyahu* (*Berachos* 1:1) and *Emes l'Yaakov* (*Berachos* 2a).
3. It seems that until the days of the *Rosh*, who lived in the thirteenth century, this was the prevalent custom in many areas. The congregation listened quietly as *Yishtabach* and *Birchos Kerias Shema* were recited out loud by the *sheliach tzibur*. [The only exception was when a verse from the Written Torah was recited; then the entire congregation recited those verses out loud in unison; see *Tur* and *Darchei Moshe*, O.C. 49.] Only in later times, when it became difficult to hear every word and to concentrate solely through listening, did the congregation chant along with the *sheliach tzibur*. At first they chanted along in an undertone, so as to not disturb those who were listening to the words. After a while the original custom fell into disuse and everyone recited everything out loud; see O.C. 59:4 and *Beur ha-Gra*, *Mishnah Berurah* and *Beur Halachah*, *ibid*.
4. As is true for all *mitzvos*, there are mystical, Kabbalistic reasons for *chazaras ha-shatz* as well. Indeed, according to the *Ari z"l*, *chazaras ha-shatz* is a higher level of prayer than the silent *Shemoneh Esrei*; see *Kaf ha-Chayim* 124:2.
5. Sometimes before the silent *Shemoneh Esrei* and sometimes after; see *Beur Halachah* 124:2.
6. *Aruch ha-Shulchan* 124:3. See *Har Tzvi* 1:61.
7. *Bach*, O.C. 124 and *Aruch ha-Shulchan*, *ibid*.
8. Responsum quoted in *Beis Yosef* O.C. 124.
9. Despite the Rambam's unequivocal ruling to this effect, it is a historical fact that when the Rambam and his son *Rav Avraham* resided in Egypt, they canceled *chazaras ha-shatz* during *Minchah* for the entire country because they could not get the congregants to quiet down and answer *amen* to the *sheliach tzibur*'s repetition.

10. Similar to a Torah Reader, who is required to practice the Torah reading before he reads it publicly – whether he is familiar with it or not; Machatzis ha-Shekel 124:3.
11. Igros Moshe, O.C. 2:29, based on Magen Avraham 124:3. There are dissenting opinions as well.
12. O.C. 126:4.
13. Mishnah Berurah 108:4.
14. O.C. 124:4.
15. An individual cannot be motzi another individual's obligation of Shemoneh Esrei of , even if the second individual is unable to daven.

16. In addition, once chazaras ha-shatz was established as a congregational obligation, it became mandatory for each individual member of the congregation as well, similar to kerias ha-Torah; Minchas Shlomo 2:4-15.
17. Mishnah Berurah 124:17. If there are not at least nine people paying attention to the sheliach tzibur, then it is strictly forbidden to learn, etc., during chazaras ha-shatz, since doing so causes these blessings to be said in vain; Igros Moshe, O.C. 4:19. See also Tzitz Eliezer 11:10.
18. Mishnah Berurah 124:27.
19. Aruch ha-Shulchan 124:12. [It is permitted, however, for a rabbi who is asked a halachic question during chazaras ha-shatz to answer it; ibid.]

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