



elements and stages in Avraham's negotiations, as described at length in the verses. He first approaches the Bnei Ches, who represent the local populace, to secure their permission for purchasing a burial estate in their jurisdiction.[6] Only after having done that, does he make contact with Efron for purposes of purchasing the specific property of the Field of Machpeilah.[7] All of this is done, as the verses emphasize, in full view of the local populace, so that no one can later object to his purchase.

Indeed, this will explain to us something else. After having described Avraham handing over the money for the field to Efron, the concluding verses then record Avraham's purchase twice![8] Additionally, there is a discrepancy between these two descriptions. The first verse states that the purchase took place "לְעֵינֵי בְנֵי חֵת" – in the view of Bnei Ches,"[9] while the second verse states that it took place "מֵאֵת בְּנֵי חֵת" – from the Bnei Ches." [10] What is behind these two descriptions?

One of the classic commentators among the Rishonim, Rabbeinu Yosef Bechor Shor, explains that these two concluding verses reflect the two things that Avraham acquired on that occasion:

Firstly, the verse describes Avraham's acquisition of the field of Machpeilah itself from Efron, through the means of the money that he paid him. This acquisition from Efron took place "in the view of Bnei Ches."

Subsequently, the Torah relates how, through the act of burying Sarah, Avraham secured his right to use that property as a burial plot. This right is one that he acquired "from the Bnei Ches" themselves.

#### First Steps

In light of all this, R' Leib Mintzberg[11] explains that, although the opening section of the parsha is about the burial of Sarah, it also involves something whose significance goes beyond that event. Avraham was promised the Land of Israel for his descendants. This episode contains the first act of Avraham actually taking legal possession of a portion of the Land, establishing his roots there by purchasing a burial plot in one of its cities. In so doing, it represents the concretization of his presence in and acquisition of the land generally. For this reason, Avraham does not wish to accept the plot as a gift from Efron, so as not to have any residual "fingerprints" left on this land by him as its donor.

This will explain an additional nuance in the concluding verses which, as we saw, describe Avraham's dual

acquisition of the field:

In verse seventeen, dealing with the purchase of the property itself from Efron, it mentions only that the cave was "לְפָנַי מִמְרֵא" – near [the territory of] Mamre."

In verse nineteen, it elaborates further on the location of the field, stating that it was "הוּא הַקְּבוּרֹן בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן" – in Chevron, in the land of Canaan."

Why is this broader setting mentioned only in the second verse? Indeed, why is it mentioned at all? We already know that the field is in Chevron, and we certainly know that it is in the Land of Canaan! Rather, the matter being dealt with in that verse – the securing of a burial plot – represents an act of acquisition that had implications for Avraham's ownership of the land of Canaan as a whole!

#### Beloved Moments

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

#### No Mention Necessary

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

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

[4] Ibid. 25:39. [5] See Ramban to verse 4. [6] Verses 3-

7. [7] Verses 8-16. See e.g. commentaries of Alshich and Malbim for detailed discussion of these verses in this

light. [8] Verses 17-20. [9] Verse 18. [10] Verse 20. [11]

Ben Melech, Parshas Chayei Sarah.

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from: Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>

date: Oct 28, 2021, 1:51 AM

subject: Torah Weekly - Parashat Chayei Sarah

by **Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair** -

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#### PARSHA OVERVIEW

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

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

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

#### PARSHA INSIGHTS

The Master of Chaos

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

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

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

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

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

I've just finished reading a fascinating book called "Chaos: Making a New Science" by James Gleick. It's a tantalizing book that made me regret not having applied

myself with more seriousness to learning mathematics at school. “Chaos” turns much of classical physics on its head:

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

And:

“It was a realization that here is a whole realm of physical experience that just doesn’t fit in the current framework. Why wasn’t that part of what we were taught? We had a chance to look around the immediate world—a world so mundane it was wonderful—and understand something. They enchanted themselves and dismayed their professors with leaps to questions of determinism, the nature of intelligence, the direction of biological evolution. The glue that held us together was a long-range vision... It was striking to us that if you take regular physical systems which have been analyzed to death in classical physics, but you take one little step away in parameter space, you end up with something to which all of this huge body of analysis does not apply. The phenomenon of chaos could have been discovered long, long ago. It wasn’t, in part because this huge body of work on the dynamics of regular motion didn’t lead in that direction. But if you just look, there it is. It brought home the point that one should allow oneself to be guided by the physics, by observations, to see what kind of theoretical picture

one could develop. In the long run we saw the investigation of complicated dynamics as an entry point that might lead to an understanding of really, really complicated dynamics.”

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

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

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

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

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date: Oct 27, 2021, 10:25 AM

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

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand’s Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly portion: #1224 – I Know She is Holding by Getting Engaged to Someone Else, But I Want To Try Going Out With Her Anyway” Mutar or Asur? Good Shabbos

The story of Eliezer making the shidduch between Yitzchak and Rivka is one of the longest narratives in the entire Chumash. The Torah seems very repetitious in relating this narrative. The 67 pesukim of Perek 24 could have been written in a far more succinct fashion. Chazal comment on this and say, “Preferable is the casual conversation of the slaves of the Patriarchs than the Torah of the descendants.” (Bereshis Rabbah 60:8). The Medrash says that some of the basic laws of tumah and taharah are derived from an extra letter vov written in the Torah, while the Torah is very elaborate regarding the discussions between Eliezer and Rivkah’s father and brother.

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

Lavan, etc.

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

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

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

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

When Avraham gave Eliezer the mission to find a wife for his son Yitzchak from his ancestral home, Eliezer asked a question [Bereshis 24:5]: What if she does not want to come – am I allowed to take Yitzchak back to Padan Aram? Avraham responded in the negative – warning Eliezer not to take Yitzchak back to Padan Aram. Eliezer’s question began with the word “U-lie” (Perhaps).

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

frank fashion: “You (as a descendant of Canaan (Bereshis 9:25)) are cursed and my son is blessed and a cursed one cannot become attached to one who is blessed.”

There are two lessons in this Chazal.

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

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

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

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

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

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

son.” How would most people react?

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

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

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This week’s write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand’s Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information.

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from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org>

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The Kindness of Strangers

**Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l**

In 1966 an eleven-year-old black boy moved with his parents and family to a white neighbourhood in Washington. Sitting with his two brothers and two sisters on the front step of the house, he waited to see how they would be greeted. They were not. Passers-by turned to look at them but no one gave them a smile or even a glance of recognition. All the fearful stories he had heard about how whites treated blacks seemed to be coming

true. Years later, writing about those first days in their new home, he says, “I knew we were not welcome here. I knew we would not be liked here. I knew we would have no friends here. I knew we should not have moved here . . .”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Sages based it on the acts of God himself. Rav Simlai taught:

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

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

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

*Chessed*, said the Sages, is in some respects higher even than *tzedakah*:

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

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

Once, as R. Yohanan was walking out of Jerusalem, R. Joshua followed him. Seeing the Temple in ruins, R. Joshua cried, "Woe to us that this place is in ruins, the place where atonement was made for Israel's iniquities."

R. Yohanan said to him: "My son, do not grieve, for we have another means of atonement which is no less effective. What is it? It is deeds of loving-kindness, about which Scripture says, 'I desire loving-kindness and not sacrifice'" (Hosea 6:6).[6]

Through *chessed*, Jews humanised fate as, they believed, God's *chessed* humanises the world. As God acts towards

us with love, so we are called on to act lovingly to one another. The world does not operate solely on the basis of impersonal principles like power or justice, but also on the deeply personal basis of vulnerability, attachment, care and concern, recognising us as individuals with unique needs and potentialities.

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

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

Of kindness and of love." [7]

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

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

[3] *Bamidbar Rabbah* 8:4.

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

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

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

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

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

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from: **Michael Hoenig** <MHoenig@herzfeld-rubin.com>

to: <cshulman@gmail.com>

date: Oct 27, 2021, 2:49 PM

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

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

Kol Tuv, Mike

Subject: Mitzvah Connection - Parshas Chaye Sarah - EPHRON

The following is a Mitzvah Connection from Parshas Chaye Sarah :

EPHRON ---

Sarah dies. ( 23:2) Avraham comes to eulogize and bewail her . He needs to properly bury Sarah and intends to purchase the MeOras HaMachpela , a cave he had become aware of earlier from which wafted a sweet fragrance and where he had experienced a vision of dazzling light .He recognized the cave contained the graves of Adam and Chava and, from then on , was determined to obtain the site as the burial place for himself and his family .

Rav Elie Munk, in *Kol HaTorah* ( 23:8 ), explains why Avraham was so anxious to acquire the burial place of Adam and Eve as a FAMILY POSSESSION IN PERPETUITY . The mission of Adam had failed with the original sin and, so the ideal plan for all humanity had failed. Avraham was the first to attempt to repair this flaw and to fulfill this calling for humanity via the Divine commandments addressed to the Jewish people and, via this, to all men . Says Rav Munk :” This universal character was of the utmost importance for the patriarch . It determined the choice of burial place for Avraham AND HIS FAMILY . Avraham considered himself the successor and repository of Adam's mission, and he did not hesitate to pay any price ... in order to assure himself of ownership of the cave wherein the first couple lay buried . "

Avraham approaches the B'nai Chais, the City Council of the Hittites, with tact and diplomacy, even bowing respectfully several times, and asks that they intercede with EPHRON Ben Tzochar, the owner of the Machpela Cave and the field in which it was situated , to sell the Cave to him as a burial site . Avraham was anxious to conclude the purchase in public in order to ensure that the acquisition would not be invalidated or encumbered by

other claims . EPHRON was present in the assemblage of the Hittite city council , having just been elevated as a Hittite leader ( because Hashem wanted Avraham to deal with a person of importance ).

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

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

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

As Rav Yisroel Reisman observes in his interesting article , " The 400th Blow ", The Jewish Observer, pp. 18-21 ( Feb. 1986 ), the number 400 appears to be significant in a number of Biblical contexts . Thus, 400 in Gematria is the numerical equivalent to the term AYIN RA - the Evil Eye . Eisav, Bilaam, Nevuchadnezzar, and even Satan are said to take their destructive powers from this mysterious force . EPHRON's name spelled without the "Vav" has the numerical value of 400 -- related to EPHRON's AYIN RA and, consequently, the exorbitant

price Avraham paid for the Cave of Machpela -- 400 Silver Shekels " Over LaSocher ". Rav Reisman also notes, for example, that " Yedai Eisav " has the numerical value of 400 symbolizing his mastery of using AYIN RA to destroy, hence Yaakov's gifts to Eisav were sent to " satisfy his eyes ". ( Note also that Eisav comes to Yaakov with a force of 400 Men ).

#### The Mitzvah Connection

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

The painful ordeal Avraham underwent in successfully negotiating for and acquiring the Machpela site from the Ayin Ra- influenced EPHRON was intended to obtain and secure a uniquely holy place as a NACHALAH , an inheritance, that Avraham's offspring would have perpetual title to it . Torah explicitly closes the episode ( at 23:19-20 ) with a detailed description of the site and its location, declaring it " Confirmed As Avraham's As An Estate For A Burial Site ...". ( VaYokom HaSadeh VeHameOrah Asher Bo LeAvraham LeAchuzas Kever ....) The Mitzvah Connection on the name EPHRON ( written Chasser) is quite strong . Indeed, Avraham's offspring, Yitzchak and Yaakov, merited to be buried there as a right of NACHALAH.

Michael Hoenig

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RABBI YITZCHOK HISIGER, EDITOR

## IN EVERY SITUATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## MIRACLES AREN’T ENOUGH

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

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

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

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

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

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Unconditional Chesed

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

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

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

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

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

discerned with a miracle.

Moreover, Eliezer was seeking a woman with the middah of unconditional chesed that included mesiras nefesh. In expounding on the pasuk in Vayeira (18:1) that Hashem appeared to Avraham in the heat of the day, our Sages tell us (Bava Metzia 86b) that it was the third day after Avraham Avinu's bris milah, and Hashem removed the sun from its sheath, i.e. it was extraordinarily hot, so that Avraham should not be bothered with guests.

But Avraham longed to have guests, so he sent out his servant Eliezer to see if there were any passersby. Eliezer said there were none, and Avraham did not believe him, so he went out himself. There he saw Hashem standing at the entrance to his tent. Here was a 99-year-old man in a weakened state, experiencing the height of the pain of the bris milah on the third day, amid a heat wave, yet he was fiercely determined to do chesed for a wayfarer. It was this standard of chesed, performed with mesiras nefesh, that Eliezer set as a criterion for the wife of Yitzchak.

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

#### A Child's Hospitality

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

R' Aryeh, who had remained nearby the entire time, asked R' Yosef what had happened.

The tzaddik recounted how he had been brought before the Heavenly Court. Hundreds and thousands of angels dressed in white appeared before the Court and said that they had been created from the different mitzvos the

tzaddik had done. Afterwards, angels who had been created from his aveiros came in, dressed in black. One said the tzaddik hadn't prayed properly, one said he had eaten something that was prohibited when he was a child, and other such transgressions were cited.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Weekly Halacha

**By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt**

Parshas Chayei Sarah

### **Honoring Parents: Basic Requirements**

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

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

#### **Kibbud Av V'eim—Honoring Parents**

Kibbud is accomplished in three different ways:

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

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

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

Parents may excuse[6] their children from the mitzvah of kibbud. In fact, it is advisable for them to do so. A parent

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

Reciting Kaddish after a parent's death falls into the category of kibbud[14]. Consequently, some poskim rule that a parent may excuse his child from saying Kaddish after his passing[15]. But other poskim hold that the son should ignore his father's request and recite Kaddish[16]. The twelve-month mourning period in which children mourn their parents is a form of kibbud[17]. Parents may, therefore, absolve their children from keeping the laws of the twelve-month mourning period[18].

#### **Mora Av V'eim—Revering Parents**

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

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

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

Even if a parent is, G-d forbid, insane and has embarrassed the child in public, it is still forbidden for the child to shame or degrade the parent[25]. He may, however, take steps to ensure that his parents do not

cause him or themselves public embarrassment, e.g., one may arrange to have his parents barred from a public gathering, etc[26].

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

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

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

#### Obedience

In general, children should honor a parent’s wish even if the parent does not “benefit” from the child’s compliance. For instance, a mother disapproves of a certain article of clothing and asks her daughter not to wear it. By honoring her mother’s request the daughter gives her mother no tangible, material benefit, so the laws of kibbud do not apply[32]. But if the daughter disobeys and insists on wearing that article of clothing, she is violating her mother’s wishes which may be forbidden under the obligation of mora, reverence[33].

Still, the poskim are in agreement that when the parent’s request will cause the child a financial loss, significant pain or anguish, or will interfere with the child’s Torah studies, the child need not obey. A child is not considered to have violated his parent’s wish when he does so for a legitimate reason (and the parent does not stand to gain any material “benefit” from the child’s compliance). Thus there are many cases when children may not be halachically required to follow a parent’s directive. Some of those include when and where to study Torah[34] or daven[35], whom to marry[36] and whether or not to live in Eretz Yisrael[37].

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

1. Sotah 13b.

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

3. Y.D. 240:4.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

11. See Sefer Chasidim 152 and 339.

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

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

14. Chayei Adam 67:6.

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

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

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

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

19. Rambam, Sefer ha-Mitzvos 211.

20. Y.D. 240:2.

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

22. Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:9.

23. Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:13.

24. Teshuvos Rivash 220; Meishiv Davar 2:50. See

- Minchas Shelomo 1:32.  
 25. Y.D. 240:8-10.  
 26. Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:32. See Tzitz Eliezer 12:59.  
 27. Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:11.  
 28. She'arim ha-Metzuyanim B'halachah 143:2. Rav S.Z. Auerbach, Rav Y.S. Elyashiv and Rav C.P. Scheinberg are quoted (Mora ha-Horim v'Kibbudam, pg. 19; Kibbud v'Yiras Horim K'hilchasam, pg. 62) as ruling that it is proper for the son to offer his seat to his father. If the father declines, then the son may sit there.  
 29. Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:11; Rav Y.S. Elyashiv and Rav B.Z. Abba Shaul (oral ruling quoted in Mora ha-Horim v'Kibbudam, pg. 19).  
 30. O.C. 90:24 and Mishnah Berurah 73, 77, 78. See Beur Halachah, s.v. vaf al pi.  
 31. Y.D. 240:17, Shach 19 and Aruch ha-Shulchan 38. See, however, Tzitz Eliezer 16:28.  
 32. This is the position of most poskim; see The Fifth Commandment, pg. 126, for the entire list.  
 33. Based on Hamakneh, Kidushim 31b and Teshuvos Rav Akiva Eiger 1:68.  
 34. Y.D. 240:13 and Pischei Teshuvah 8. See Minchas Yitzchak 5:79 and Koveitz Teshuvos 3:139.  
 35. Pischei Teshuvah, Y.D. 240:22, quoting Chamudei Doniel.  
 36. Rama, Y.D. 240:25.  
 37. See Tzitz Eliezer 14:72 and Yechaveh Da'as 3:69 and 4:49.

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fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

From: Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky <rmk@torah.org>

Date: Wed, Oct 27, 2021, 11:16 AM

Subject: Drasha - The Rising Waters of Menschlichkeit

To: <drasha@torah.org>

Drasha

**By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky**

Parshas Chayei Sarah

The Rising Waters of Menschlichkeit

Avraham [Abraham] sent his servant Eliezer on quite a difficult mission. Find a shidduch [match] for not only the

world's most eligible bachelor, but for its most spiritual. Yitzchak [Issac] was designated by Hashem to be offered as a sacrifice. He never left the land that would one day become Israel. And he was raised by the founders of Judaism, Avraham and Sarah.

It isn't easy to find a match for such a special individual. Avraham made Eliezer promise that he would not bring back a Cannanite woman for his son. Instead, Eliezer was to search among Avraham's family in Charan and find a suitable maiden for the sacrosanct young man.

Laden with gifts, Eliezer left for Charan. As a selection criteria he devised a sure-fire approach. "Avraham," he thought, "is the epitome of kindness and hospitality. Surely Avraham would want those qualities prevalent in his daughter-in-law." He prayed to Hashem to guide him. "When I arrive in Charan, I will ask a maiden for water. The maiden," he thought, "who replies by saying, 'drink, and I shall even give your camels to drink, [and drawing water for camels who had just completed a long desert journey is no simple task]' must be the one who is designated for Yitzchak." (Genesis 24:13-14)

The exact scenario that had been prayed for actually occurred. As Eliezer stood by the well in Charan, Rivka [Rebecca] walked toward it. The posuk (verse) tells us that as soon as Eliezer watched Rivka begin to draw water, he raced toward her and asked her the pre-determined questions. The gracious response led to our destiny.

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

Yet, if such a miraculous event occurred, why did Eliezer continue with his pre-planned act? Why did he ask Rivka for water and wait until she responded by offering drinks to both him and his entourage? Also, when Eliezer discusses the entire scenario with Rivka's family and tells them why he decided upon Rivka, he repeats the story of Rivka's grace and hospitality. Yet Eliezer fails to mention of the miraculous incident of the rising waters.

In the Slobodka Yeshiva, nothing was as important as the study of Torah. Students who excelled in their diligence and ability were viewed in awe. But the greatest

reverence was saved for the founder of the Yeshiva, Rabbi Nosson Zvi Finkel, the Alter [Sage] of Slobodka (1849-1927). With his brilliance, humility and great character, he set the tone of the entire Yeshiva.

One day two students were discussing a new young man, Isaac Sher, who had just entered the Yeshiva. "Isaac is a true ilui (prodigy)," said one. "He knows the entire Shas (Talmud) and Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish Law), by heart."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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subject: Chayei Sarah

Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parashas Chayei Sarah

By Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

תשפ"ב; פרשת חיי שרה

קבר אברהם את שרה אשתו אל מערת שדה המכפלה... היא חברון

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

The Meoras Ha'Machpeilah is the final resting place of

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

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

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

Sadly, this is the type of tyranny under which we had lived throughout our exile.

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

The Patriarchs replied, "You must return the sultan's sword or the entire Jewish community of Chevron will be annihilated. However, have no fear, for in another seven days you will return here to be with us."

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

ותאמר שתה וגם גמליך אשקה

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

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

this sensitivity to others – even to animals – that exemplified Rivkah's character. Kindness means more than providing what one asks. Kindness means looking and appraising oneself of what someone needs. Thinking of others, regardless of who or what they are, indicates the loftiness of one's character.

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

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

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

The following story is a classic demonstration of how far our sensitivity should extend – even to those who are no longer with us. When our sensitivity is flawed, it affects our subconscious to the point that the little flaw will manifest itself later under different conditions. At that point, it will no longer be a little flaw, but a major failing. The Klausenberger Rebbe, zl, traveled with a group of his chassidim to the kever, grave, of the holy Tanna, Rabbi Yehudah Bar Ilai, which is located in Ein Zeisim,

northern Eretz Yisrael. Chazal refer to him usually as Rabbi Yehudah. He was known not only for his extraordinary erudition, but also for his strict and meticulous adherence to Halachah. While visiting the kever, the Rebbe and his entourage davened Minchah at the same time/zman when Klausenberger chassidim usually daven. (The zman to which they adhere is somewhat later than what is the accepted norm.

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

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

earlier – at a time that coincided with Rabbi Yehudah's halachic opinion."

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

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### **Parsha Potpourri**

Parshas Chayei Sorah – Vol. 17, Issue 5

Compiled by **Rabbi Ozer Alport**

אך אם אתה לו שמעני נתתי כסף השדה קח ממני ואקברה את מתי (שמה 23:13)

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

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

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

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

In deriving one of the laws defining the conception of a marriage from this episode, the Torah is teaching us the proper outlook on marriage, namely that the very essence of the relationship is intended to be one that is focused on

giving to and sharing with one's spouse, rather than a selfish focus on fulfilling one's own desires. Entering into marriage, or any other relationship, with this Torah perspective is a proven recipe for improving our middos and enriching our bonds with others.

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

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

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

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

Although this calculation is fascinating and enables us to account for all the events in Yaakov's life, Rav Moshe Shmuel Shapiro questions Rashi's terminology. Why does Rashi say that the information about Yishmael's lifespan may be used to determine “the years of Yaakov's life?” In reality, we already know Yaakov's lifespan and the other events that occurred throughout his life. The only information that we derive from the knowledge that

Yishmael died at 137 is that Yaakov spent 14 years studying in the yeshiva of Ever. Wouldn't it have been more accurate for Rashi to write that this information allows us to compute “the years in which Yaakov studied with Ever?”

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

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

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

Kalman Moshe ben Reuven Avigdor, Rabbi Kalman Packouz.

“May his Neshama have an Aliya!”

A Universal Loss

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

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

Furthermore, the commentaries (see Riva, Ohr Hachaim, Klei Yakar, and others on this verse) are troubled with three other issues in the construct of the possuk: 1) The

beginning of the verse informs us that Sarah died and yet the Torah, which budgets its words and letters so carefully, repeats her name again at the end of the possuk. Why? 2) Why does the Torah place her name in between Avraham eulogizing for her and his crying? 3) Finally, doesn't crying usually come before the eulogizing? In other words, why didn't the Torah simply write, "Avraham came to weep and eulogize her"?

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

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

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

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

Efron Memorial Gardens?

And Efron's field that was in Machpeilah, which was opposite Mamre, the field and the cave contained therein and all the trees in the boundary around it, was acquired

by Avraham as a purchase... (23:17-18)

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

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

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

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

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

Avraham an exorbitant sum (see accompanying Did You Know column) to remove his name from the deed.

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

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

Did You Know...

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

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

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

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

and also fulfills its original function.

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