

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON CHAYEI SARA - 5760

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"RAVFRAND" LIST - RABBI FRAND ON PARSHAS CHAYEI SARAH

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 214, Pilegsh: An Alternative to Marriage? Good Shabbos! NEW! YAD YECHIEL INSTITUTE IS ON-LINE! Visit <http://www.yadychiel.org/> or send e-mail to tapes@yadychiel.org ! Special Announcement: New Book By Rabbi Frand: "Listen To Your Messages -- And Other Observations On Contemporary Jewish Life" [Mesorah / Art Scroll]

Ask Not What External Events Can Do To You; Ask What You Can Do To Maintain Equilibrium In The Face of External Events The Medrash comments that the name change from Sarai to Sarah signified our Matriarch's being given dominion over the entire world (from the word Sarah -- female officer or ruler). If one looks at Sarah's life, however, one certainly does not get the impression that she ruled over the entire world and that she "called the shots". In effect, she was dominated by events that surrounded her. For many years she had no children. She was taken as a captive, first by the King of Egypt and then by Avimelech. And yet, we are taught that she was given the name Sarah (rather than Sarai) because she ruled over the entire world.

Rav Nissan Alpert suggests that in spite of all that happened, Sarah did rule over the entire world. A person who can maintain her equilibrium, her serenity and faith, in spite of the events that surround and effect her is indeed a person who "rules over the entire world".

We cannot change the course of events. There are things that will happen between nations; there are natural phenomenon; there are things that will happen in a family. This is what life is all about. As anyone who has lived for any significant amount of time knows, life is a series of going from one crisis to another.

How does one rule over all that and manage to "dominate events"? Only by maintaining one's serenity and equilibrium throughout it all. That is what the life of Sarah was. For a woman to remain barren for 90 years and experience so many the trials and tribulations was not a simple matter. And yet we see the same Eishes Chayil [woman of valor], the same Ba'alas Chesed [personality of kindness], the same Matriarch Sarah throughout. This is indeed a person who ruled over the entire world.

This too can be used to explain the continuation of the Medrash. The Medrash attaches symbolism to the 127 years that Sarah lived. "Let Esther the granddaughter of Sarah who lived for 127 years come and rule over 127 provinces." The commentaries are all perplexed by the apparently random equation of the number 127 appearing in two places in the Bible.

The explanation is that Esther also had a life of trials and tribulations. Esther had a life that could have been influenced by events that happened to her. She was an orphan. She was taken against her will to the palace of the King...

Esther could have forsaken her people in exchange for the success and the fame that she was receiving. However, Esther remained rock solid in her faith. She did not let events shape her life. She maintained herself. Therefore, Esther could rule over 127 provinces -- virtually the entire known world at that time.

If a person has learned the secret of not letting external events shape his or her life and rather maintains an internal serenity in spite of those

B'S'Devents, that person has in fact achieved a great degree of control.

One Can Still Get Burned From "Matches Made in Heaven"

The Torah tells us that Eliezer traveled to the house of Besuel and Lavan looking for the right wife for Yitzchak. On the way, Eliezer received tremendous S'yata d'Shmaya [Help from Heaven]: Our Rabbis tell us that the distance miraculously shortened for Eliezer. It took him much less time than it should have normally taken. Eliezer received Divine approval. The sign that he made up helped him unambiguously identify the right match for Yitzchak. (The maiden who says, "I will also give your camels to drink...") Everything fit into place like a glove.

When Eliezer related the entire story to Rivka's father and brother (Besuel and Lavan), they responded "This matter has come out from G-d. We cannot speak about it -- for bad or for good" [Bereshis 24:50]. In other words, they recognized that this match was Ordained in Heaven. It was 'Basherte'.

Eliezer took Rivka, brought her back to Yitzchak, and related all that had happened and all of these signs. If anyone ever needed confirmation that he had the right Shidduch [marriage partner], Yitzchak surely had such confirmation in Eliezer's description.

The pasuk [verse] then says that Yitzchak brought Rivka to the tent of Sarah his mother, and he married her [24:67]. The Targum interprets this verse to mean that "Yitzchak took Rivka and he saw that her deeds and actions were like those of his own mother, Sarah. Therefore, he married her."

The Brisker Rav asks, what more did Yitzchak need? Eliezer told him about all the miracles and all the incontrovertible signs from Heaven. What more could he ask for?

The Brisker Rav answered that simple people always see these "signs from Heaven", but not a Yitzchak. Yitzchak knew that all that matters is whether she was a righteous woman - whether she had the attributes and deeds of his mother Sarah. The "righteous individuals", Lavan and Besuel, are blown away by the "signs". They see the Hand of G-d in everything. However, the holy person - the really righteous person, does not look for signs or try to play "Providence Guessing" games. Such a person looks at the bottom line.

I often deal with young men who are going out on dates with prospective marriage partners. Everyone is looking for 'simanim' (signs) from Heaven. I remember when I was going out, many long years ago. I was driving with a girl who happened in fact to be the girl that I married. We were driving on Long Island and we stopped in a store and bought a box of Cracker Jacks. (That week Cracker Jacks were Kosher). For those who remember back to the time when they used to buy Cracker Jacks, the box used to contain a little prize and a "fortune" message. Here I was, on a date, we bought the Cracker Jack and the fortune said, "You will meet a man with blue eyes, whose name is Joe".

We pulled into a gas station. In those days there was no self-service. The attendant came out. I looked into his face and I see that his eyes were blue. I asked him, "What's your name?" He answered, "Joe". I almost proposed on the spot! -- From G-d the matter has come out!

This however, is not the proper approach. The correct approach is not seeing "signs". The correct approach is not intuiting that "it is Basherte" (destined) because everything is going so smoothly and everything is pointing to it.

All of that is nothing. What it comes down to, as the Targum explains, is "and Yitzchak saw that her actions were those of Sarah". Do not look for signs; do not look for Providence; do not look for miracles. Look for the standard by which we know how to judge: actions, kindness, religiosity, and honesty.

Miracles are for G-d. We live in a world of action. It is not in Heaven (Lo b'Shamayim he). We can not look at signs. That is for Lavan and Besuel. For Yitzchak, the only thing that is important is the fact that her actions are those of Sarah.

Personalities and Sources Rav Nissan Alpert (died 1986); [Limudei Nissan] New York City. Brisker Rav (1886-1959) [Rav Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik]; Lithuania; Jerusalem. Targum (Onkelos) (died c. 90); Authoritative Aramaic translation of Chumash. Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington twerskyd@aol.com Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Yerushalayim dhoffman@torah.org Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 for further information. <http://www.torah.org>

From: Ohr Somayach[SMTP:ohr@virtual.co.il] * TORAH WEEKLY *
Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion Parshat Chayei Sara
Man Alive "These are the lives of Sara..." (23:1)

Neshama. She had always liked her name. Neshama. A name which whispered the very breath of life. Neshama breathed in deeply the life-giving fluid in which she floated. Turning on her side, the life-support cable gently undulated in the dark liquid-world like a lethargic seasnake. It was at a time like this that one thought about the elemental things. Name. Life. The future. She was frightened. What lay ahead of her? As far back as she could remember, she had been in this safe secure waterworld. Now her life was drawing to an end. Death, non-being, the end of all she knew, of knowledge itself, awaited her at the tunnel's end. Like a puny raft circling on the edge of a giant whirlpool, she felt herself being drawn inexorably down into the vortex. Panic rose in her mouth. A primordial fear of the unknown gripped her. I don't want to die! I want to stay in this world and live forever! She had spent her days here in deep meditation on the secrets of the universe with her spiritual guide. But now she was alone. And she knew this was the end.

The time had come. It seemed that her ears filled with the most sublime music. A single chord of all the watervoices sounding one wordless chord undulating through every known scale. The sound grew and grew. She was terrified. Terrified of the pain. Terrified of not feeling the pain anymore. Down and down she went. Down to the world's end. Down to the place of death. It was here. This was the end. It was over. She had died.

It wasn't a particularly busy night in the delivery rooms at Hadassah Hospital. Another little soul had just come into the world. Screaming and crying as though she had been summoned reluctantly to this earthly sphere. The nurse cleaned the little baby, wrapped her in swaddling to keep her warm, and gave the baby into her mother's arms. The mother looked at her newborn daughter and thought to herself. "You are so beautiful, little Neshama."

Like the dark world before this existence, this world too is no more than a dark corridor compared with the great palace of light into which we will enter. This world is the place where we have the opportunity to prepare ourselves to enter that palace. To the extent that we prepare, so we will be able to bask in that radiance.

I don't know about you, but I don't find it so easy to see this world as a corridor. It's so easy to get caught up looking at all the neon signs along the way. It's so easy to think that this world is the palace itself. And it's a pretty shabby palace for all its beauty. Is there anyone here who dies with even half his dreams fulfilled? With how many problems and heartaches and backaches is this world filled!

This week's parsha is called Chayei Sara -- "The Lives of Sara." It's a strange title. This is the Parsha in which Sara passes away. So why is it called "The Lives of Sara?"

The name is apt. Because only when we leave this passing world do we really start to live. Later in the book of Bereishet, there is a Parsha called Vayechi Yaakov -- "And Yaakov lived." That's the Parsha in which Yaakov passes away. As the Talmud says, "the righteous in their deaths are called alive."

There's an interesting fact about the Hebrew word for "life." It has no singular. Chaim is a plural noun. Maybe that's to remind our neshama, our soul, that there are two lives -- and this one is only a prelude to the "main attraction."

Sources:

* Rabbi M.A. Amiel in Iturei Torah

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From: Rabbi Kalman Packouz[SMTP:packouz@aish.edu] Subject: Shabbat Shalom! Chayei Sarah
DVAR TORAH: based on Growth Through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin

Eliezer arrives in Charan. Rivka gives him water to drink. The Torah states, "And she finished giving him to drink. And she said, 'Also for your camels I will draw water until they finish drinking' " (Genesis 24:19). Why does the Torah specify that she will draw water rather than writing "I will give the camels to drink"?

The great Spanish Rabbi, the Abarbanel, tells us that Rivkah was meticulously careful not to say anything that would be untrue. Therefore, she said she would draw water, as if to say, "I don't know for sure if they will drink or not, but I will draw water for them. If they want to, they can drink."

Rabbi Shmuel Walkin adds that we see here how careful we should be to keep away from saying anything untrue. He cites as an example Rabbi Refael of Bershid who was always very careful to refrain from saying anything that was untrue. One day he entered his home while it was raining outside. When asked if it was still raining, he replied, "When I was outside it was raining." He did not want to mislead in case it had stopped raining from the time he entered his home.

This may seem to be ridiculous or inconsequential. However, if a person is careful with keeping to the truth in such instances, he will definitely be careful in more important matters. On the other hand, if a person is careless with the truth, he can even be tempted to lie in major ways!

From: Rabbi Jonathan Schwartz jschwartz@ymail.yu.edu Subject: Internet Chaburah -- Parshas Chayei Sarah (fwd)

Prologue: When an individual enters a crisis state he is faced with only two possible outcomes. The first is a complete loss of functioning, and an inability to use his existing coping resources to deal with the sudden stress he seems to be facing. The results, if not treated quickly, are catastrophic. The other possibility is an advance in functioning and enhanced emotional stability. In fact, the Greek root of the word crisis implies a cross between disaster and opportunity.

Often, during this crisis, the individual recognizes the immense pressure he is under and relieves his pressures by renewing his faith and his thanks to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. This reaction, Hakarat Hatov, recognizing the good that is done to us, is a basic theme surrounding the early parshiyot of Sefer Berasheit. Rav Lessin ztl., former Mashgiach at Yeshivat Rabbeinu Yitzchok Elchanan, would often cite a Midrash Tanchuma that properly accented the need to express thanks to Hashem. According to the Midrash, a world inhabited with descendants of a man created by God should not have been able to rebel against that God by building the Tower of Bavel. However, the same Adam, who was created by that God, forgot to properly demonstrate Hakarat Hatov for his creation and that of his wife.

Instead, Adam complained. By doing so, he instilled in his children

and future generations that one could deny God's goodness. According to Rav Lessin, denying one's goodness is a few short steps away from denying the individual as well.

Current crisis intervention theory maintains that social support is the strongest defense to a full-blown crisis. It is interesting to see how within the same crisis model, we find the dependence upon support of a community and the need for subsequent Hakarat HaTov. Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop ztl. (author of the Sefer Mei Marom) notes that for this reason, Avraham Aveinu got up and bowed to the children of Chet who had assisted him in securing Sarah's burial plot. Avraham, in the midst of his crisis, knew that the proper protocol required his demonstrating Hakarat Hatov to the children of Chet for the favors and support they provided him.

The world today knows how to pitch in when experiencing crisis. We have Chessed networks and would drop anything and everything to help another Jew in need. However, the crisis of celebration is also an act of Chessed. We have to know how and when to participate in another's simcha and how to be Makir Tov to those who help us during those times, making our Simcha complete. Through the Simcha we must not forget the individuals.

This week's chaburah is built upon a similar theme. it is entitled:
DOWN THE LINE: WHO CAN USHER?

The Rema (Yoreh Deah, 391:3) notes the European minhag to have two males escort the Chosson to his Chuppa. The Matteh Moshe (Hil. Hachnossos Kalla) derives the source for this Minhag from the Midrash that notes that Michoel and Gavriel were "Shushvinim" for Adam at his wedding. The Tashbatz (HaKotton, 465) adds that the Minhag is based upon the idea that a Chosson is like a king and a king should have legions surrounding him. The Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (147:5) applies the Din of Shushvinim to the Kalla as well. In a noted teshuva, Rav Menashe Klein (Shut Mishneh Halachos VII, 247) points out that in America the Litvak Minhag is to have the parents of the Chosson and the parents of the Kalla serve as the shushvinim escorting their respective parties to the Chuppa. In Israel (Shut miYam haHalacha IV, 67) the Minhag is to have the Chosson escorted by his father and father in law and the Kalla by the two mothers (See Shut Shevet HaLevi III, 87 who explains this Minhag).

What is the function of these Shushvinim and who can be one, is a subject of great debate among the Meforshim. Rashi (to Berachos 61a) explains that a Shushvin is one who assists in the Chuppa and the Zivig. The MaHarsha (Berachos, 61a) explains that the word merely reflects a term of friendship. He bases his interpretation on the Targum to Shmuel (Chap. 13) where the term Rei'ah is translated as Shushvin.

Based upon this conflict of definition, Rav Klein (ibid.) notes that anyone can be a Shushvin. However, the Orchos Chaim (Kiddushin, pg. 70) maintains that Shushvinim should be older and wiser people. The Shulchan HaEzer (7:4:1) writes that when selecting a set of Shushvinim, they should be married to each other and in their first marriage. He notes that the function of Shushvinim is merely that of a Siman Tov. He adds that the Minhagim concerning who can serve as Shushvinim really have little or no basis in Halacha and the stringencies concerning who can serve and with whom appear to be nothing more than old wives' tales. Dayan Weiss (Shut Mincha Yitzchak V, 80) agreed noting that the Satmar Rebbe was Machmir when people asked him but was not Makpid and was even Mesader Kiddushin when the Shushvinim were single and even unlearned.

L'Halacha, it appears that the rules of Shalom win out over old wives' tales. If one's friends will be insulted if not asked to "walk down the aisle" because they are single or unlearned or young, it appears to be ok to appoint these people as Shushvinim in order to minimize the potential insult. However, it should be noted that one must only pair married couples together when walking down (See Taz E.H. 65:2) to prevent

mixed couples that are Assur.

BATTALA NEWS
MAZAL TOV .. UPON THE ENGAGEMENT OF YOSEF ZELEFSKY TO DANIELLA ROTHBERGER.
MAZAL TOV TO RABBI AND MRS. NESANYL BRAUN UPON THE BIRTH OF TWINS.

From: Yeshivat Har Etzion's Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash [SMTP:yhe@vbm-torah.org]
IN MEMORY OF LORD RABBI IMMANUEL JAKOBOVITS ZT"L,
FORMER CHIEF RABBI OF BRITAIN, A MAN OF VISION AND INTEGRITY.

Yeshivat Har Etzion Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash (Vbm) Student Summaries of Sichot Delivered by the Roshei Yeshiva
PARASHAT CHAYEI SARA SICH'A OF HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN SHLIT"A
WAS ELIEZER'S TEST APPROPRIATE?
Summarized by Ramon Widmonte And [the servant] said: Hashem, God of my master Avraham ... The girl to whom I say, 'Please pour some water for me to drink,' and who responds, 'Drink, and I will also fetch water for your camels' - she is the one whom You have proven [to be the correct mate] for your servant Yitzchak. (Bereishit 24:12-14)

In its discussion of the definition of nichush (soothsaying), the Gemara (Chullin 95b) cites Eliezer, the servant of Avraham, as the archetype of a soothsayer, since he chose a wife for Yitzchak based on an omen. Tosafot respond vigorously, asking: How it is possible that Eliezer, who was prohibited from engaging in nichush, would do so? Obviously, they respond, Eliezer did not sin. Rather, one can see that Eliezer based his final choice of a wife on other considerations, since he did not give Rivka the bracelets until after she had explained her genealogy to him. Thus, he did not really rely upon a vacuous sign, but was convinced more by her parentage.

The Rambam (Hilkhot Avodat Kokhavim 11:4) disagrees with Tosafot and writes that Eliezer did indeed sin. The Ra'avad (ad loc.) takes an entirely different approach, saying that the gemara was not at all discussing the parameters of what is defined as forbidden nichush, but rather was just debating what kind of signs are more effective. Thus, according to the Ra'avad, the gemara was simply saying that although Eliezer's actions did not fall under the category of forbidden forms of nichush, nevertheless it is not wise to rely on such a sign.

Obviously, it is illogical to direct one's actions according to phenomena which are not at all connected to the issue at hand - for example, a fox straying across one's path and other such omens which are listed by the Rambam. However, what Eliezer did was inherently logical and far-sighted, and quite relevant to the matter at hand. He set for himself a test which would gauge Rivka's personality; one might say that it reflected the essence of her soul.

Chazal state that Eliezer was seeking the kind of personality he had encountered in Avraham's home: a "ba'alat chesed," a person who embodied the kind of chesed (loving kindness) which was Avraham Avinu's central characteristic. (See Rashi on Bereishit 24:14.)

Let us ask ourselves what exactly Eliezer sought.

We can discern two directions in answering this question if we examine the dispute concerning Rivka's age. Rashi (Bereishit 25:20) states that Rivka was three years old at the time of this event; the Da'at Zekeinim Mi-Ba'alei Ha-Tosafot (following the Seder Olam Rabba) maintain that she was fourteen years old. As we saw regarding the opinions about the age at which Avraham discovered God, this dispute is not merely academic; rather, these ages symbolize stages in a person's spiritual development, and color our entire understanding of his personality.

Rashi's vision of what Eliezer sought is intriguing: children at such a young age tend to display an overwhelming egocentricity - they do not give, but are accustomed to taking and depending upon others. They do not yet possess the faculties to understand that the world does not revolve about themselves. Thus, a child who possesses the quality of chesed at such a young age has it almost inherently, instinctively, as part of her basic spiritual constitution. Usually, at the age of three one can speak only of very general directions in personal development; in the case of Rivka, however, she was so conspicuously different in this area that one would have had reason to believe that the trait of chesed was highly dominant in her makeup.

Secondly, if Eliezer was searching for a young child, this indicates that he sought a relatively unmolded person, one who would be unresisting to having the contours of her personality shaped by Yitzchak Avinu. This is Rashi's

Rivka - the Pure and Passive Rivka, a personality to be molded.

Tosafot's view, however, differs on both accounts. A fourteen-year-old girl is a ba'alat chesed because she has decided to be one and has acted upon that decision; it is not an instinctive, supernatural spiritual boon.

Moreover, according to Tosafot, Eliezer was not looking for a timid child who follows her husband's lead; rather, he was looking for someone to lead Am Yisrael together with Yitzchak Avinu. Rivka's figure is a dominant, powerful one. This is Tosafot's Rivka - the Nation Builder.

If we set aside the dispute for a moment, we have presented here two facets of the test which Eliezer set for Yitzchak's potential bride: a) the strength of her commitment to the specific quality of chesed; b) her ability to take the initiative - this with regard to all of her qualities. Firstly, the test gauged the extent of her commitment to chesed. Was she merely a person who did not resist the idea of chesed, perhaps she even admired it; or, was she a person who was "rodef chesed," one who charges after the opportunity to perform a kindness? According to both Rashi or Tosafot - regardless of whether her kindness was instinctive or decided-upon - the test was designed to measure its strength.

Secondly, Eliezer was trying to distinguish the level of her leadership initiative - he was searching for someone who was not just a cheftza but a gavva, not a passive object but an active subject.

Generally speaking, the ability to take initiative is a very positive quality. But when speaking of a potential mate for Yitzchak, it becomes crucial. Generally, Yitzchak is portrayed as a relatively passive character. When he decides to leave Eretz Yisrael in a time of famine (Bereishit 26:3), God tells him not to move, but to stay where he is. In the akeida, he is the archetype of sacrifice: Avraham is tested, but Yitzchak never reacts; he is sacrificed, quietly and willingly. Later, when Yitzchak digs wells, he gives them the same names his father gave them (Bereishit 26:18).

In short, Avraham is a spiritual revolutionary, while Yitzchak is far more passive, willing to walk in his father's footsteps and never feeling the need to step out of his father's shadow. Most indicative of his passivity is the fact that towards the end of his life, he becomes blind - to the extent that Rivka controls the entire issue of succession and the dispute over the birthright, working around him when necessary! Ya'akov, too, was transformed from the child who does as his mother bids him into a resourceful planner and executor of a broad strategy - as is evident in his conflicts with both Lavan and Esav.

Thus, we see that a highly motivated, active figure was needed to balance the more quiet and introspective Yitzchak.

Indeed, after reviewing Eliezer's actions, we would seem to side with the Ra'avad and also against him. Not only did Eliezer's actions not constitute nichush, but they were, on the contrary, a carefully planned, finely tuned test, designed to find a mate who would complement Yitzchak, who would carry on the values of Avraham, and who would lead Am Yisrael at its formative stages of development. As Eliezer says, '... She is the one whom You have PROVEN [to be the correct mate] for your servant Yitzchak' (Bereishit 24:14). It was PROOF Eliezer wanted, not an omen; and it was proof most specifically for a mate for YITZCHAK.

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From: Jeffrey Gross[SMTp:jgross@torah.org]

This week's learning through Project Genesis has been sponsored for the speedy and complete healing of Golda Nutta bas Sima by Gail and Arthur Morgenstern - please learn for her speedy healing.

Weekly-halacha for 5760 Selected Halachos Relating to Parshas Chayei Sara

BY RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT

A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

A NON-KOSHER SEFER TORAH

The laws of honoring a Sefer Torah which were discussed in last week's column apply - for the most part - only to a kosher Torah. A non-kosher (pasul) Torah, even if it can be corrected, does not receive the respect that a kosher one does(1). Thus it is permitted to leave it unattended, there is no requirement to stand in its honor and one may

turn his back to it, etc.(2) Indeed, a non-kosher Torah should not be left as is but should be corrected as quickly as possible(3), or at least before thirty days have elapsed(4). Even a privately-owned Sefer Torah must be maintained so that it does not become pasul. [Some individuals commission the writing of a Sefer Torah in order to fulfill, according to all views(5), the mitzvah of writing a Sefer Torah; but an individual whose Torah is pasul does not fulfill the mitzvah.(6)]

Is there, however, any purpose that a pasul Torah may serve? More specifically, may it be used for Kerias ha-Torah when no other Torah is available? The answer to this question is the subject of dispute among the Rishonim.

THE VIEWS OF THE RISHONIM Most Rishonim(7) are of the opinion that a pasul Torah cannot be used for Kerias ha-Torah. Since the reading must take place from a written text, reading from a pasul Torah is akin to reciting by heart. According to this opinion, even b'dieved the reading is invalid and the blessings recited over it are considered l'vatalah. If the weekly parshah is read in shul and subsequently a mistake is found in the Sefer Torah, the Torah reading must be repeated.

There are, however, dissenting opinions. The Rambam(8) writes that one may - even l'chatchilah - read from a pasul Torah. He explains that the mitzvah of kerias ha-Torah does not require that it be read from a written text. The essential component of the mitzvah is to read words of Torah in public on Shabbos morning. Indeed, according to his view, if someone knows the entire parshah by heart, he may recite it - with the blessings before and after - without using a text at all(9). Surely, then, reading from a pasul Torah, even if a word or a pasuk is missing here and there, is valid(10).

A third view in the Rishonim, advanced by the Ran and quoted by Rama, is as follows: Unlike the Rambam, he maintains that a pasul Torah may not be used, and even b'dieved the reading is not valid. But unlike the other Rishonim, he holds that as long as the chumash that is presently needed is error-free, we need not be concerned with mistakes or missing words in the other four chumashim. For example, if the Torah has a mistake somewhere in Sefer Shemos but is error-free in Sefer Bereishis, it is permitted - under extenuating circumstances - to use that Torah to read any parshah from Sefer Bereishis.

In practical halachah we take into account all of the views which are mentioned above(11):

PRACTICAL HALACHAH - L'CHATCHILAH

L'chatchilah, the latter poskim are unanimous that a pasul Torah may not be used for Kerias ha-Torah under any circumstances, even if no other Torah is available. While the parshah is still read for the congregation from the pasul Torah, the blessings before and after the reading may not be recited. Indeed, even the blessings over the haftarah are not recited, since the haftarah is only recited when a valid Torah reading takes place(12).

The poskim are divided as to whether or not we may rely on the aforementioned view of the Ran, who allows reading from a pasul Sefer Torah if the mistake is found in a chumash other than the one which is presently being read. Many poskim are lenient, and it is permitted to rely on this view(13) under extenuating circumstances(14).

PRACTICAL HALACHAH - B'DIEVED:

But, b'dieved (lit., after the fact), if the reading - or part of it - already took place and then the mistake was found, we rely on the view of the Rambam and consider the completed reading of the Torah as valid and as if one has fulfilled his obligation. The blessings already recited are not considered l'vatalah. Thus if the mistake was found after the entire reading was completed, the parshah is not re-read, even if a kosher Torah is available. In this case, the haftarah is read with its blessings(15).

If the mistake was found in the middle of the reading and no other Torah is available, the reading is continued in the pasul Torah until the end of the parshah. While the minimum of seven olim are still called to the Torah, they do not recite the blessings over their portions. Instead,

the one who was called up at the time the mistake was found remains on the bimah, and at the end of the parshah he recites the final blessing(16). [There are conflicting opinions as to whether or not the haftarah is recited with its blessings in this case.]

If the mistake was found during the reading and another Torah is available to read from, we do not - as explained - repeat the part that was already read. Instead, another Torah is removed from the aron, rolled to the right place, and the reading resumes(17). But whether or not a final blessing is recited depends on the following: If the mistake was found after three pesukim were read and it is halachically permitted to stop at this point(18), the final blessing is recited before the second Torah is taken out. A "before" blessing is then recited over the second Torah.

If the mistake was found before three pesukim were completed(19), or even if after three pesukim were read but in a place where a stop may not be made(20), then the final blessing is not recited. The second Torah is immediately taken out, the reading continues [without a blessing before the reading] until the next aliyah and the final blessing is recited(21).

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

A practical ramification of the discussion above regards bar-mitzvah boys. Many bar mitzvah boys who practice their keri'ah extensively and often know it almost by heart, inadvertently recite some words from memory without actually reading them from the written text. While they are not permitted to do so and should be trained to read every word from the text, it is clear from the above discussion that b'dieved the congregation fulfills its obligation, since after the fact, we rely upon the views that hold that reading from a pasul Torah, or reading by heart, is valid.

FOOTNOTES: 1 Mishnah Berurah 153:8. 2 Aruch ha-Shulchan Y.D. 282:3. 3 If it cannot be corrected, then it should be hidden away. 4 Y.D. 279:1. 5 See Y.D. 270:2 and Pischei Teshuvah 10. 6 Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 545:1. See, however, Minchas Chinuch 6 13:10 who remains in doubt whether or not this mitzvah is only a once-in-a-lifetime obligation, which means that as long as the Torah was kosher at one time the mitzvah has been fulfilled. 7 This is the view of Ra'avad, Ramban and Rashba, Ritva and most of the Rishonim who followed them. 8 Teshuvos ha-Rambam, Pe'er ha-Dor. 9. The fact that the Rambam seems to contradict himself in Hilchos Sefer Torah 10:1 is subject of much debate and there are various ways of resolving the contradiction. 9 The Rambam here does not deal with the separate prohibition of reading from a written text "by heart". Perhaps he held that this prohibition is only mitzvah min ha-muvchar (Tosfos Yeshanim, Yuma 70a). See Rambam Hilchos Tefilah 12:8 and Kesef Mishneh. 10 Many other Rishonim agree with this basic view, among them: Mordechai, Kol Bo, Avudraham, Orchos Chaim, Agur, Ohr Zarua, Mizrahi and several others. This was also the view of several Geonim and the common practice in their day [as attested to by the Rambam] who relied on it in order to use the Sifrei Torah which were written on klaf and had not undergone the process of ibud. 11 We have followed the rulings of the Mishnah Berurah in O.C. 143. There are other opinions and customs as well. 12 Beir Halachah 284:1 (s.v. asur). 13 For Shabbos morning only; Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 24:10. 14 Beir Halachah 143:4 (s.v. yeish); Aruch ha-Shulchan 143:7. 15 Mishnah Berurah 284:3. 16 If the mistake was found during the reading but after the oleh had recited the final blessing on his portion, the rest of the parshah is read without any blessings at all. 17 When possible, the remaining part of the parshah should be divided among seven olim (Mishnah Berurah 143:13,16) since, in many shuls, the custom is too call additional olim on Shabbos (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 24:7). 18 There are some places where it is prohibited to stop even if three pesukim have been read: 1) If fewer than three pesukim remain before a parshah pesuchah or setumah; 2) During the final aliyah on all days when there is keri'ah ha-Torah except for Shabbos morning; 3) During Aseres ha-Dibros, Shiras ha-Yam, the Tochachah of Parshas Bechukosai and the last eight pesukim of the Torah (Eliyahu Rabbah 143:6). 19 If the mistake was found in middle of the third pasuk, the pasuk should be completed, the final blessing is recited and then the second Torah is taken out; Harav M. Feinstein, oral ruling quoted in Imrei Shalom 1:12. See also Chayei Adam 31:33. 20 See note 18. 21 If this occurred on Monday, Thursday or Shabbos afternoon and ten pesukim were already read, a second Torah is not taken out.

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From: Har Etzion Virtual Beit Midrash[SMTP:yhe@vbm-torah.org]
Subject: HAFTORA -05: Parashat Chayei Sara THE WEEKLY
HAFTORA By Rav Yehuda Shaviv PARASHAT

CHAYE SARA

"Better the End of a Matter than the Beginning" (Melakhim I 1:1-31)

a. Advanced in Years

This Haftora, like its predecessor, is taken from the book of Melakhim, this time from the beginning of the sefer. Our Sages took note of the common expression, "old, advanced in years": following the story of Sara's death and her burial in the cave in the field of Makhpela, our parasha opens with the words, "And Avraham was old, advanced in years." Similarly, the book of Melakhim opens with the description, "And King David was old, advanced in years..." But this parallel serves only to emphasize the difference between the two situations: in Avraham's case this is the beginning of a new phase of his life, while for King David this expression introduces the beginning of the end.

b. First and Last

What is really involved here, though, is more than just a common expression. It is in fact a similarity in their life stories. Both Avraham and David are builders and founders. Avraham lays the foundations for the chosen nation, while David establishes the kingdom. Both wander and journey from place to place until they reach their permanent dwelling. Avraham and David are the two ends of a patriarchal dynasty of national leadership - Avraham is the first of the "seven shepherds," David is the seventh. And much of David's success seems to derive from the strength of our first forefather, Avraham, who paved the way for the royal dynasty. And while the Haftora deals with the coronation of Shlomo, who is destined to rule over the entire kingdom and be recognized by foreign kings near and far, the honor he is accorded is similarly bestowed upon Avraham in our parasha, when the nations declare, "You are a prince of God among us..." (23:6).

c. Towards Evening Do Not Hold Back Your Hand

For both these elderly men a woman is sought in order to ameliorate their old age. For David the quest is for an attendant who will ease his physical suffering, while Avraham seeks a wife in the full sense of the word for the purpose of a productive joint future, and she bears him six children. The difference is even more discernable in light of the fact that in David's case the initiative comes from those around him ("And his servants said to him, Let their be sought for my lord the king a young girl..."), while concerning Avraham we are told, "Then again Avraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah" (25:1). Additionally, he waits until he has first taken care of arranging a suitable wife for his son before establishing himself.

c. The Quality of the Home

David's royal dwelling is established many, many years after the foundation of the national home by Avraham. We would have thought that the royal kingdom would be strong and firm, but the picture described by the Haftora - in contrast with the parasha - presents the very opposite situation. Avraham, whose life has many twists and complications, is the firm head of his household in his old age. He personally ensures appropriate continuity: "And Avraham gave everything he had to Yitzchak. And to the children of the concubines... Avraham gave gifts and sent them from the proximity to Yitzchak his son, while he was still alive..." (25:5-6). David's household, on the other hand, is full of plots and intrigue, and Adonia goes so far as to crown himself during his father's lifetime.

Avraham also merits to see Yishmael, the son previously banished from his home, reconciled and returning. His death thus brings to conclusion a full life, when he is satisfied and old: "And his sons Yitzchak and Yishmael buried him..." (25:8-9). Concerning David, on the other hand, we do not know whether any of his children besides Shlomo participated in his burial.

d. A Question of Education?

Perhaps the key lies in the early education of the children

concerned. Concerning Avraham God declares, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of God..." (Bereishit 18:19). With regard to the episode of Adonia, however, the implication is that this failure is due in some way to David's education of his son: "And his father had never grieved him at any time in his life saying, 'Why have you done this?'" (1:6). (Our sages expound upon this idea at length ϕ see the Midrash at the beginning of Shemot Rabba.)

e. David, King of Israel, Lives

But where we witness David's weakness we also find his reawakening and revival.

King David lies on his sick-bed and appears helpless. It goes without saying that he is far removed from knowing what goes on in the kingdom. As it turns out, he has no idea even of what goes on in his own household. And yet within an instant he is revived and comes back in full force; he summons Bat-Sheva and makes her swear to crown Shlomo immediately - he is active and forceful. And in the face of this revival Bat-Sheva is full of admiration, and blesses him, "Let my lord King David live forever!" It is this call which rings in our ears at the conclusion of the Haftora reading, and it is unequalled in its expression of David's special quality which accompanies him throughout his life: renewal and revival.

f. Faith and Effort

There is nothing which influences the course of an individual's life as much as the choice of spouse, and there is nothing which influences the life of the nation more than its leadership. It is only natural, then, that these matters be directed from Above.

Thus we find written concerning a person's spouse: "From the Torah, from the prophets and from the other writings ϕ 'It is God Who chooses the wife for a man...'" (Moed Katan 18b), and we learn in Massekhet Sota (2b): "Forty days prior to the formation of a child, a Heavenly voice declares, 'the daughter of So-and-so for So-and-so...'"

We find that the issue of leadership is likewise decided on high ϕ not only national leadership, but leadership or rulers of any type, as we learn in Massekhet Berakhot (58a): "Even he who is placed in charge of the diggers is appointed by God."

If we wish to single out the main narrative of the parasha, the most important element is undoubtedly the choosing of a wife for Yitzchak. And if we wish to determine the crux of the Haftora, it is unquestionably the appointment of an heir, a successor, to King David. And in neither case does the party concerned rely on a Divine promise; both do whatever they can in order to achieve what they believe needs to be done and what will yield the best results.

Avraham sends his faithful servant far away to find someone suitable for Yitzchak. Although he knows that "God, the Lord of the heavens... will send His angel before you" (24:7), this does not exempt him from acting and making a personal effort.

We find the same idea ϕ perhaps expressed even more vividly - in the Haftora. With regard to the heir to David's kingdom, an explicit promise has already been conveyed to him from God ϕ a promise which he eventually reveals to Shlomo, his son: "Behold, a son shall be born to you, he shall be a man of tranquility and I will give him rest from all his enemies around, for his name shall be Shlomo, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel in his days. He will build a house for My name... and I shall establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever" (Divrei Ha-Yamim I 22:9-10).

This heavenly promise must have been known to Natan the prophet ϕ he himself may very well have uttered these words in the first place. And so it is most surprising that he is so perturbed by the actions of Adonia. Would we not expect him to be completely at peace within himself, safe in the knowledge that no matter what plans a human being draws up, "God's word will prevail forever"? Why did he need to engage in consultations and conspiracies, to instruct

Bat-Sheva as to what she should say, and to take the trouble to appear personally before the king?

It seems that his very awareness of the "Divine plan" is what gave him the strength, enthusiasm and ability to devise a plan and act, in order to bring about the fulfillment of that plan; to be a partner of God. (Translated by Kaeren Fish)

From: Rabbi Lipman Podolsky [SMTP:podolsky@hakotel.edu]

Subject: Parshas Chayei Sarah

Care-full Prayer

Prayer is an enigma. Usually when we serve Hashem, we act as loyal servants without expectation of remuneration (although every good deed is rewarded, this is not the ideal motive; see Avos 1:3). But with prayer, the whole point is to expect to be answered (Sefer HaChinuch 433). "He will do the will of those who fear Him; He will hear their cry, and He will save them (Tehillim 145:19)."

Understandably, when one's tefillos remain unfulfilled, one tends to doubt. "Is Someone up there really listening?" Of course no one ever promised us that the answer to our prayers would be "yes". Still, though, perhaps we can cull some guidance from our parsha to facilitate the delivery of our prayers, and to increase our chances for a positive response.

"And Yitzchak went out to 'speak' in the field toward evening...(Breishis 24:63)" -- From here we learn that Yitzchak established the Mincha prayer (Brachos 26b).

For what did Yitzchak daven? He must have had good reason at this particular time to institute a new prayer! The Kli Yakar presumes that he most probably davened for a proper shidduch. As our sages reveal: "For this let every pious person pray to You in a time of need (Tehillim 32:6) -- Says Rabi Chanina, this refers to [praying for] a wife, as it is written: One who has found a wife has found good (Mishlei 18:22) (Brachos 8a)." (My spouse's favorite quote!)

As such, we are stunned by an incredulous coincidence. Extraordinarily, Yitzchak's prayer was answered immediately! "And Yitzchak went out to 'speak' in the field toward evening, and he looked up and saw, behold, camels were approaching..." -- the very camels that were delivering his kalla, Rivka! Why was Yitzchak's prayer so instantly and meticulously acknowledged, a phenomenon we find only very rarely throughout history?

The solution calls for us to return to last week's parsha. "And Avraham prayed to G-d, And G-d healed Avimelech and his wife, and his maid-servants, and they gave birth. For Hashem had sealed every womb of the household of Avimelech because of the matter of Sarah... (20:17)." Directly following we are told: "And Hashem remembered Sarah...and she gave birth... (21:1)." Rashi elucidates that these two events are juxtaposed "to teach you that when someone prays for a friend, and he is in need of the same thing, he is answered first."

What could possibly be the reasoning? If I daven for him, why should I receive what I need? If both my friend and I are suffering from strep throat and I supply him with antibiotics, does my infection miraculously disappear?

One explanation may be, when a person suffers from a serious need, there is a natural tendency to feel selfish. "Why should I worry about someone else's problem when I have that very same need?"

But if the person is capable of extricating himself from the mire of self-centeredness, if he can subdue his ego and intensify his concern for the needs of another, so much so that he actually davens for the other person with true, heartfelt kavanna, this demonstrates genuine, Jewish self-sacrifice. The Midda K'negged Midda dividend: Hashem actually fulfills his own need first.

If this holds true for someone who merely davens for another, how much more should it be true of someone who physically assuages his

friend's need, oblivious of his own pain.

Immediately prior to Yitzchak's tefilla, the Torah relates that he had just returned from a place called "Be'er Lachay Ro'i" (24:62). Rashi explains that he had traveled there after his mother's passing, to restore Hagar to his father Avraham.

Let us please appreciate the overwhelming hurdles Yitzchak had to overcome. Certainly Yitzchak missed his mother. To return from the Akeida only to find her gone must have been a tremendous blow. Yet, on the other hand, his father was now a widower, in need of a wife. Feelings of bereavement do not absolve a person from fulfilling his obligations to the living. Thus, in an act of utter selflessness, Yitzchak heroically overcame his love and longing for his departed mother, to bestow the greatest chessed upon his father.

But there is still more. Yitzchak was now forty years old and had yet to find a wife. He was unquestionably concerned about fulfilling this great mitzva, particularly as he was foreordained to bring forth the future Jewish Nation. Yitzchak had a critical necessity to fulfill; how could he possibly suppress his own feelings and focus on those of his father?

Nevertheless, Yitzchak himself (not a messenger) went to a great effort to bring back Hagar to satisfy his father's need first. To Yitzchak's credit, not only did he daven -- he acted. Thus it is no wonder that immediately following his tefilla for his own shidduch we read, "And he lifted his eyes, and he saw camels coming..." He took three steps back at the end of his Sh'mone Esrei, and lo and behold, there she was, his bashert, riding on a camel.

Let us not think that these lofty ideas worked only for the Avos. A distraught, childless woman, approached a rabbi for a blessing. The rabbi tried to excuse himself. "For a blessing, you should go to a Tzaddik," he told her. She didn't relent. "Please, rebbe, give me a bracha!" Finally the rabbi said, "Look, I'm no Tzaddik. My own daughter has been married for years, and has not yet merited to have children. But Chazal teach us that when one person prays for another, she herself is answered first. Let's make a deal. I'll daven for you, and you daven for my daughter. Maybe Hashem will hear our supplications."

Many months passed. The rabbi was extremely busy due to a family simcha; his daughter had finally given birth to a beautiful baby. Several days later, the rabbi received a phone call from the same woman. She had wanted to invite him to a bris. Miraculously, she had given birth on the very same day!

How often we wonder why our tefillos have not yet been fulfilled? "Hey, I'm a nice guy," we say. "I davened with at least fifty percent kavanna! Why does Hashem hesitate to grant my request? For how long must I wait for my bashert?" There are many answers to these questions, but maybe, just maybe, b'siyata d'shmaya, this principle can help us achieve our quest.

May all our tefillos be answered l'tova, bimheira b'yameinu!!

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From:Ohr Somayach[SMTP:ohr@virtual.co.il] Subject:Simcha's Torah Stories - Chayei Sarah

SAY A LITTLE, DO A LOT

Look at that, George. There must be twenty boxes piled up over there on the sidewalk. Let's see what's doing. Excuse me sir, why are all of these boxes piled up here on the sidewalk?

I'm sorry if it is causing anyone inconvenience. I run an organization which provides food for needy families for the Sabbath. I just received my weekly delivery of meat, fish, vegetables, wine, challah bread, and cake. I must get them into the storage room, then divide

them up into packages for each family. Then I will distribute the packages to the families.

That sounds like a lot of work. You wait right here. I'm going to send over some workers to help you. They will move the boxes for you, open them and divide up the contents, wrap them up into packages and even deliver the packages to the needy families. I'll send you five good strong workers and this job will be done in no time.

Do I owe you any money for this? Money? I'm giving this to you.

Just wait here and the workers will be here in five minutes. Them man waits and waits. After half an hour the workers still have not shown up. Just then four boys from the Yeshiva walk by on their way home.

Shalom, Rabbi Cohen. Hello boys, how are you? Fine. What are all of those boxes Rabbi? This is food for needy families for Shabbos.

Without saying anything, each boy picks up a box. Where shall we put these boxes, Rabbi Cohen? That's so kind of you boys. Put them in here. But Rabbi, you can't leave them here. There are perishables in these boxes. Don't worry about it boys, I'll take care of it. Rabbi Cohen, we insist. Please tell us what to do.

With that, Rabbi Cohen instructs them how to open the boxes, divide the contents and wrap them up into packages for each of the families.

We're all finished Rabbi Cohen. Here are the thirty packages. Boys, thank you so much. I don't know where I would be without you. We can deliver them on our way home from Yeshiva. Please, boys. You've done enough already. I can't ask you to do any more.

So we'll do it without your asking, Rabbi Cohen. Please tell us the addresses. Are you sure it's no trouble boys? We're walking home anyway. We insist. Please Rabbi, let us finish the job. Okay, boys, here's the list. Look, these two homes are on my street. And those people live around the corner from me. They live not far from here. Within minutes, all of the packages are divided amongst the boys. They then set out on their way to deliver them. Bye boys. I don't know how to thank you. You've really saved me hours of time and hard work. You don't have to thank us, Rabbi Cohen. It was our pleasure.

Just at that moment, the workers sent by the two men arrive on the scene. There is supposed to be a man with some boxes here who needs workers to help him. Do you know anything about it sir? We were sent here to do a job for this man. We were told that he would pay us well. I'm sorry to disappoint you men. The work has already been done. Rabbi Cohen chuckles and thinks to himself . . .

Things haven't changed much in the past 4000 years. The Mishnah in Pirkei Avos (1:15) states, "Say little but do much." Rashi explains that Avraham Avinu said very little (Bereshis 18:5-8). He only told his guests that he was going to serve them bread. Then he returned with butter, milk, fine tender meat, and three huge portions of flour. Efron, on the other hand, made a big promise. He offered to give Avraham Avinu the Maaras HaMachpela (Cave of Machpela) as a burial ground for Sara for free. In the end, however, he demanded and received an exorbitant sum of money from Avraham Avinu for the land. Rashi comments (Bereshis 23:16) that Efron said a lot, and did not even do a little.

Those first men promised to take care of everything for free. In the end their workers showed up late, expecting to get paid. The Yeshiva boys, on the other hand, came and got right to work, saying hardly anything. Avraham Avinu's deeds made such a powerful impression on the Jewish people, that we are still emulating them 4000 years later. When he did something, he really "did a lot".

Simcha's Quiz Question of the Week There are three boxes. One is labeled "APPLES" another is labeled "ORANGES". The last one is labeled "APPLES & ORANGES". You know that each is labeled incorrectly. You then pick one fruit from one box that you choose. Which box do you draw from and how can you label the boxes correctly? Send your answer to simchag@netvision.net.il

Answer to last week's quiz question: A ship is at anchor. Over the side hangs a rope ladder with rungs a foot apart. The tide rises at a rate of 8 inches per hour. At the end of six hours, how much of the rope ladder will remain above water, assuming that 8 feet were above the water when the tide began to rise?

The Answer! Since the ship is afloat, the water level in relation to the ship stays the same. Therefore, 8 feet are above water, just as the beginning! Written and Compiled by Simcha Grossman General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman Production Design: Eli Ballon Ohr Somayach International 22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103 Jerusalem 91180, Israel E-Mail: info@ohr.org.il Home Page: <http://www.ohr.org.il>

From: Menachem Leibtag [SMTP:ml@tanach.org] Subject: PARSHAT CHAYA SARAH - shiur

This week's TSC shiurim are dedicated: in loving memory of Nathan Miller ZT"l by his wife Esther, children and grandchildren. and: in memory of Jack Levin (Chaim Yaacov ben Shlomo Yitzchak) on the occasion of his fourth Yahrzeit." and by: Susan and Jacques Gorlin to commemorate the fourth yearzeit of Boris Gorlin, A"H.

THE TANACH STUDY CENTER [<http://www.tanach.org>] In Memory of Rabbi Abraham Leibtag

PARSHAT CHAYA SARAH

Below you will find three 'short' shiurim.

PART ONE - "ELOKEI HA'SHAMAYIM"

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

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

To better appreciate the various answers that they provide for the above question, we must first review the context of these two psukim. In chapter 24, Avraham Avinu is sending his servant to find a wife for his son Yitzchak from his family in Charan. [Most likely, 'his servant' refers to Eliezer, even though his name is never mentioned (even once) in this entire parsha!]

To guarantee that Eliezer will faithfully fulfill that mission, Avraham makes him take an oath in the Name of "Hashem, the God of the Heavens, and the God of the Earth" (see 24:1-4). When Eliezer questions what to do should "miss perfect" prefer to stay in "chutz la'aretz" (see 24:5), Avraham makes it quite clear that he will not allow Yitzchak to leave Eretz Canaan (see 24:6). To reassure Eliezer that his mission will indeed be successful, Avraham promises (or prays / see Radak 24:7) that "Hashem the God of the Heavens", who took him from his homeland... will send an 'angel' to help (see 24:7). The obvious question is what we mentioned above, i.e. why does Avraham 'shorten' his second description to simply "the God of the Heavens" However, the commentators first deal with a more fundamental question. They are troubled by Avraham's description of God as: "Hashem, the God of the Heavens and the God of the Earth" (24:3), for this seems to imply that there may be multiple gods! [It would have been much better had Avraham simply said "Hashem, the God of Heaven and Earth" like the first pasuk of Breishit implies.] In our shiur, we will begin with a discussion of how the commentators deal with this question, and afterward we will return to our original question.

The basic approach of all the commentators is to relate this special phrase "the God of the Heavens and the God of the Earth" to this specific situation, i.e. Avraham makes (a) his servant, (b) take an oath, (c) to bring a wife for his son, (d) from Charan. As we will see, each commentator will relate to one of these four points, that: (a) his servant may not understand God's providence (b) Eliezer must be frightened to keep this oath (c) this is a "shiduch" mission (d) his servant is leaving Eretz Yisrael

(a) Radak offers a 'philosophical' explanation. He claims that Avraham may be worried that his servant, even though he believes in God, may not believe that God's providence extends over mundane matters down on earth as well. Therefore, Avraham emphasizes this point in his opening statement, that he is not only the God overseeing what happens in the Heavens, but He also oversees what happens on earth. However, when Avraham speaks of himself later on in 24:7, he need only mention "elohei Ha'shamayim", for it is very clear to him that God's providence is over everything.

(b) Sefermo offers a similar but more 'practical' explanation relating to Avraham's effort to assure that his servant will keep this oath. However, he understands 'earth' and 'heaven' as referring to 'this world' and the 'world to come'. In this manner, Avraham tries to 'scare' his servant that should he not keep this oath, not only will he be punished in this world, but also in the world to come!

(c) Ibn Ezra relates to the fact the Avraham is sending his servant on a mission to find a wife. Finding a spouse, even though it appears to be an event that takes place on the "aretz", is really decided upon in heaven. This commentary is most likely based on the Gemara in Moed Katan 18b ("amar shmuel..." in the middle of the daf, that on each day a "bat-kol" proclaims the daughter of "ploni" will be married to the "ploni").

(d) Finally, Ramban offers a very 'zionistic' explanation. Unlike the other commentators who understand "aretz" as referring to the 'earth', i.e. to event that take place on earth or in this world, Ramban understands "aretz" as referring to the 'land of Israel'. Because his servant is now leaving Eretz Yisrael (but must bring Yitzchak's future wife back to this land), Avraham adds the phrase "elohei ha'aretz" to his description of God.

Note that unlike the other commentators, Rashi does not relate to this specific question on 24:3. Instead, Rashi deals with our opening question, but his beautiful interpretation of 24:7 solves the problem in 24:3 as well. Let's take a look. As we explained above, Rashi is bothered by the fact that Avraham (in 24:7) refers to God only as "elohei ha'SHAMAYIM" even though in 24:3 Avraham refers to Him as "elohei ha'ARETZ" as well. Rashi, based on a Midrash of R' Pinchas in Breishit Rabba 59:8, differentiates between how mankind once perceived God BEFORE Avraham was chosen (as reflected in 24:7), and how mankind now perceives God (in 24:3). When God first commanded Avraham to leave his homeland (see 24:7), no one on earth recognized God; therefore His Kingdom was only in Heaven. Once Avraham had 'made aliyah' and began to proclaim His Name to the public (see Breishit 12:8 and Ramban on that pasuk), His Kingdom is now known 'on earth' as well. Therefore, when Avraham now sends Eliezer on his mission, God can be referred to as both "elohei ha'shamayim" AND "elohei ha'aretz". Note that Rashi's explanation is definitely not the 'simple' "psat" of these psukim. Clearly, the interpretations offered by the other commentators provide a more 'local' explanation for the specific use of this phrase. Nonetheless, this Midrash definitely reflects one of the primary themes of Sefer Breishit (as discussed at length in our shiur on Parshat Lech L'cha), and hence reflects the "psat" of the Sefer, rather than the "psat" of the pasuk. Here we find a beautiful example of the art of Midrash, taking the opportunity of an apparent problem in the "psat" of a pasuk to deliver an important message concerning the entire Sefer.

In conclusion, it is important to note a common denominator to all the interpretations presented above. We find that when we refer to God, it is not necessary to always refer to Him by the same Name. Instead, we refer to God in the context of our relationship with Him. For example, in the Ten Commandments, we speak of God as Hashem, kel KANA (see Shmot 20:2-4), and in the Second Luchot we speak of God as "Hashem, kel RACHUM v'CHANUN" (see Shmot 34:6-8). In other words, the appellation that we use for God relates to the specific situation that we are in. The best example is from daily tefilla, when we begin with "Hashem, eloheinu v'elohei avoteinu", then in each of the 19 "brachot" that follow we relate to God based on one of His attributes in relation to the specific request or praise of each "bracha". Next time you "doven", take note!

PART TWO - AVRAHAM AVINU & 'REAL' ESTATE The beginning of this week's Parsha is well known for its detailed description of the bargaining between Avraham and Efron. Some claim that Efron's intention all along was to get the highest price (see 23:16), and his generous opening offer - to give Avraham the land gratis (see 23:5-6) - was nothing more than a ploy. But if this assumption were correct, why would Sefer Breishit find it necessary to discuss this event in such minute detail? If our basic assumption that the stories of Sefer Breishit help develop its theme of "bechira," then perhaps we should view this narrative from the perspective of theme. Let's give it a try.

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

1) Bnei Chet's perception: Efron and his people [Bnei Chet] reign sovereign in Chevron and the surrounding region. Their families had been living in those hills for generations and had every reason to think that they would continue to do so. As they see it, Avraham is just a "wandering Jew" and poses no threat whatsoever to their autonomy. Remember, Avraham had lived in Mesopotamia until age 75, and even since his migration to Canaan he spent much of his time traveling to & from cities such as Shchem, Bet-el, Chevron, and Beer Sheva. Having never established permanent residence, Avraham represents no challenge to the sovereign government of the Chittim. Furthermore, Avraham constantly

'called out in the Name of God' wherever he went. His teaching earned him a widespread reputation, and Bnei Chet thus refer to him as "nasi Elokim ata b'tocheinu" - you are a prince a God in our midst (see 23:6). But his career sent him constantly 'on the road.' Bnei Chet thus had no reason to believe that Avraham would ever return. Therefore, there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of their original offer to grant Avraham [at no charge] any burial plot he desires (see 23:5-7). Even in our own time, many societies express their appreciation for individuals who preach morality and dedicate their entire life to God by offering various benefits [what we call a 'clergy discount']. Their generous offer simply reflects their sympathetic understanding of Avraham's difficult situation - a wandering 'man of God' who needs a place to bury his wife. They most probably assumed that this family would never be seen again. After all, Avraham's only son from Sarah was not even married. For Bnei Chet, this entire incident was of little significance - Avraham posed no threat to their future or permanent autonomy in the land.

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

Therefore, Avraham insists on paying the full price. He's not interested now in 'handouts' or presents. He wants it known that this burial plot and its surrounding field belongs to his family. He therefore insists on paying full price and specifically in the presence of all the community leaders ("I'chol ba'ey shaar iro" / read 23:16-20 carefully). In Avraham Avinu's eyes, this is a momentous occasion - he has now purchased his first "achuza" in "Eretz Canaan" (note 23:19-20!).

FOR FURTHER IYUN: To fully appreciate the significance of this transaction, compare the psukim noted above to 17:7-8. Relate this comparison to the previous shiur on Brit Milah. Note also the emphasis on "achuza" and "Eretz Canaan" in the repetition of these psukim in 25:9-10, 49:29-30 & 50:13!

PART THREE / "ZERA V'ARETZ" - A PROMISE, COVENANT, AND OATH

Just prior to sending his servant in search of a wife for his son, Avraham briefly reviews the various stages of his "bechira": "Hashem Elokei ha'shamayim asher l'kachani m'BEIT AVI u'MERETZ MOLADATI v'asher DIBER li, v'asher NISHBA li lay'mor - l'ZARACHA ETAYN et ha'ARETZ ha'zot..." (24:7)

Recall from Parshat Lech L'cha that Hashem had made three promises (12:1-3, 12:7, 13:15) and two covenants (15:18, 17:8) concerning the future of Avraham's offspring in the Promised Land. Hashem repeats one phrase time and time again, in one form or another, throughout these prophecies to Avraham: "Izaracha e'tayn et ha'aretz ha'zot." Note the parallel between Avraham's aforementioned comments to his servant and Hashem's promises: "asher l'kachani m'BEIT AVI u'MERETZ MOLADATI" echoes the opening promise of: "Lech l'cha m'artzcha, u'm'MOLADTICHA u'm'BEIT AVICHA."

However, the continuation of this statement: "v'asher DIBER li, v'asher NISHBA li lay'mor ..." raises an obvious question: when did God make an OATH ("nishba") with Avraham regarding his descendants' occupation of the Land? This question sparked a controversy among the commentators. Rashi explains that this oath was made at Brit Bein Ha'btarim, while Radak sends us to the Akeyda.

The reason for this controversy is quite simple. The term "shvu'a" - oath - appears only once throughout all of God's prophecies to Avraham heretofore - immediately after the Akeyda: "bi nishbati n'um Hashem, ki ..." (see 22:16)

Thus, Radak cites the Akeyda as the source for "nishba li." Rashi, however, rejects this contention, presumably because nowhere at the Akeyda does God say anything similar to "Izaracha e'tayn et ha'aretz ha'zot." Rashi therefore cites as the source of God's oath Brit Bein Ha'btarim, which includes the promise: "ba'yoim ha'hu ka'rat Hashem [note shem Havaya, as above in 24:7] et Avram brit lay'mor: Izaracha na'tati et ha'aretz ha'zot..." (15:18)

Even though the actual word "shvuah" is never mentioned at Brit Bein Ha'btarim, God's establishment of a covenant with Avraham may itself constitute a guarantee equivalent to a promise on oath (a "shvuah"). In truth, a closer look at the psukim relating to the Akeyda may reveal that BOTH Rashi and Radak are correct: "By myself I SWEAR ["bi nishbati"], the Lord declares: Because you have done this and have not withheld your son... I will bestow My blessing upon you ["ba'rech a'varech'cha"] and make your descendants as numerous as the stars of the heaven ["k'kochvei ha'shamayim"] ... and your descendants will CONQUER the gates of their enemies ["v'YIRASH zaracha et sha'ar oy'vav"]...(15:17)

Given the context - the aftermath of the Akeyda - we can well understand why this oath focuses primarily on Avraham's descendants ("zera"), who will

evolve from Yitzchak. The promise regarding the Land emerges as less dominant a theme in God's vow. This oath does, however, contain several expressions taken directly from God's earlier promises to Avraham concerning the "aretz," especially Brit Bein Ha'btarim. The following table highlights the literary parallel between God's promise at the Akeyda and previous promises to Avraham:

AKEYDA (15:17)	PREVIOUS PROMISES
ki ba'rech avarech'cha	v'avar'ech'cha.. v'heyeh bracha (First Promise - 12:2)
v'harbe arbe et za'racha k'kochvei hashamayim	habet na ha'shamayma - u'reah et hakochavim... ko y'hiyeh za'recha (Brit Bein Ha'btarim - 15:5)
v'yirash za'racha et shaar oy'vav	lo y'i'rash'cha zeh, ki yim asher yetze m'mey'eka, hu y'i'rasha (Brit Bein Ha'btarim - 15:4)
v'hitbarchu bzaracha kol goyei ha'aretz...	V'nivrchu b'cha kol mishpichot ha'addama (15:18) (First Promise - 12:3)

This parallel demonstrates that God's oath after the Akeyda reaffirms His previous promises and covenants. Avraham's statement, "v'asher nishba li lay'mor l'zaracha etayn et ha'aretz ha'zot," can be thus understood as his own understanding of God's promise BOTH in Brit Bein Ha'btarim (shitat Rashi) AND the Akeyda (shitat ha'Radak), as one essentially compliments the other.

This interpretation also explains the redundancy in Avraham's statement: "asher DIBER li v'asher NISHBA li": * "asher DIBER li" - most probably refers to Brit Bein Ha'btarim, which begins with "haya DVAR Hashem el Avram..." (15:1, see also 15:4); * while "asher NISHBA li" refers to the oath of the Akeyda (22:16).

THE OATH Why is an oath necessary in ADDITION to God's original promise and covenant? Furthermore, why does God make this oath only after the Akeyda? The answer to these questions relates to the nature of the original promise and covenant, as explained in the last three shiurim. Recall that in reaction to the events of Migdal Bavel (mankind's development into an anthropocentric society), God chose Avraham Avinu IN ORDER THAT his offspring become a special nation that would lead all nations toward a theocentric existence [shiur on Noach]. Three promises and two covenants guaranteed Avraham Avinu a special Land ("aretz") to allow his offspring ("zera") to fulfill its destiny [shiur on Lech L'cha]. This goal is to be achieved by this special nation's embodiment of the values of "tzedek u'mishpat" [shiur on Parshat Va'yera]. One could suggest that in recognition of Avraham Avinu's display of complete faith in, and dedication to, God, as reflected specifically in the story of the Akeyda, God elevates the status of His original promise from a "brit" [covenant] to a "shvuah" [oath]. But what's the real difference between a covenant and an oath? The covenant arrangement is by definition bilateral; it allows for one side to break his agreement should the other party break his. At the Akeyda, God takes His obligation one step further. An oath is a unilateral commitment, binding regardless of what the other side does. God now swears that even if Am Yisrael should break their side of the covenant, He will never break His original promise. Although His nation may sin and consequently be punished, they will forever remain His people. Herein lies the primary significance of the Akeyda as it relates to the developing theme of Sefer Breishit. As the story of Avraham Avinu nears its conclusion, God brings His relationship with Bnei Yisrael to the level where He will never abandon us. The Akeyda, the greatest example of "m'sirut nefesh," symbolizes an indispensable prerequisite for Am Yisrael's development into God's special nation - the willingness to dedicate one's entire life to the service of God. The site of the Akeyda, Har Ha'Moriya, later becomes the site of the Bet Ha'Mikdash (see II Chronicles 3:1), the most prominent symbol of that relationship.

shabbat shalom, menachem

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Moed Katan 21b HALACHAH: GREETING AN AVEL OPINIONS: The Gemara concludes that a person should not greet an Avel with "Shalom" even after the Shiv'ah is over, until thirty days have passed. If the Avel is mourning for the passing of his father or mother, then one may not greet him until twelve months have passed. Is this prohibition practiced today?

(a) The RITVA and CHIDUSHEI HA'RAN write that they have not seen this Halachah observed, but they write that they do not know why it should be permitted. he SHULCHAN ARUCH (YD 385:1) quotes the Halachah of the Gemara and says that greeting an Avel with "Shalom" is indeed prohibited.

(b) The REMA (YD 385:1), however, records that people are generally lenient to greet someone who is an Avel for a parent after thirty days (and if he is an Avel for a relative other than a parent, after seven days -- DARCHEI MOSHE). He suggests that the reason it is permitted is because the greeting that was extended in the times of the Gemara differed from the form of greeting which is common today. The DARCHEI MOSHE in Orach Chayim (89) explains that in the times of the Gemara, when they greeted each other with "Shalom Aleichem," they also bowed down. The Gemara is saying that only that form of greeting is prohibited. To extend a greeting the way it is done today -- by just saying "Shalom Aleichem" -- is permitted.

HALACHAH: The SHACH and MAGEN AVRAHAM (OC 554:21) write that, l'Chatchilah, a person should be stringent and observe the Halachah as it is expressed by the Gemara, but if someone is lenient he does not have to be rebuked.

Moed Katan 23 LEARNING TORAH IN THE HOUSE OF AN AVEL QUESTION: The Beraisa (22b) states that when a Nasi dies, all of the learning in all of the Batei Midrashos ceases in respect for the Nasi. The Beraisa continues (23a) and says that in the house of an Avel, we do not say over words of "Shemu'ah" and "Agadah" (Halachic teachings and Agadic teachings). The Beraisa says that Rabbi Chananyah ben Gamliel, though, holds that we may say over Shemu'ah and Agadah.

How can Rabbi Chananyah ben Gamliel permit saying Shemu'ah and Agadah in the house of an Avel? The Gemara (15a, 21a) states clearly that an Avel may not learn Torah during Aveilus!

Moreover, when the Beraisa says that we may not say over Shemu'ah and Agadah in the house of an Avel, why does it single out these two particular areas? The Beraisa earlier (21a) gives a long list of all of the areas of Torah learning which are prohibited for an Avel to learn. Why does the Beraisa here not mention all of them, like the Beraisa earlier does?

ANSWERS: (a) The RAMBAN in Toras ha'Adam explains that this Beraisa is referring to learning Torah in the house of an Avel *on Shabbos*, when the Avel may not observe his Aveilus in public. The Beraisa is saying that even though an Avel does not observe his Aveilus in public, he may not learn these areas of Torah. Rabbi Chananyah permits it, because he maintains that this is considered to be practicing Aveilus in public. However, everyone agrees that if a practical Halachic question arises, the Avel is allowed to teach the Halachah.

(b) The RAMBAN gives a second answer. He says that th "Beis ha'Avel" mentioned in the Beraisa is referring to the Batei Midrashos mentioned earlier in the Beraisa, which ceased all learning activity due to the death of the Nasi. The Beraisa is now saying that not only is the regular Torah learning stopped as a sign of mourning for the Nasi, but the Talmidim may not even learn areas of Torah that do not require deep analysis and that are not usually learned in the Batei Midrashos. Rabbi Chananyah says that these areas of Torah may be learned in the Batei Midrashos that are in mourning for the loss of the Nasi.

(c) The SHULCHAN ARUCH (YD 378:7) cites this Gemara as the Halachah. From the context of his ruling, it seems that he understands the Gemara not to be referring to Shabbos, nor to the Batei Midrashos of the Nasi, but rather it is referring to the home of an individual Avel. The SHEVET YEHUDAH explains that according to the Shulchan Aruch, the Beraisa is not referring to what the Avel himself may or may not learn; the Avel himself is certainly prohibited from learning Torah. Rather, the Beraisa is referring to others who come to visit the Avel. When they talk amongst each other, they may not talk together in Torah, even in matters of Shemu'ah and Agadah.

HALACHAH: The common practice today is to learn Mishnayos in the home of the Avel, l'Illuy Nishmas the departed relative. The Poskim write that this is a positive practice. The NETZIV (Meshiv Davar 5:56) explains at length that since it is done for the benefit of the Mes, it is certainly permitted. The Avel himself, though, should not listen, since he is not permitted to learn. (If possible, the Avel should go into another room while the others who have come to comfort the mourner learn the Mishnayos together l'Illuy Nishmas the deceased.) In addition, the Talmidim of the Mes should not be the ones who learn Mishnayos, since the Gemara says that his Talmidim must refrain from learning.

Moed Katan 26 "BUT I AM STILL THE KING!" AGADAH: The Gemara describes Yehoyakim's initial response to the prophecy of the destruction of Yerushalayim that Yirmeyahu wrote. When the king's attendant read to him, "Alas -- she (the city) sits in isolation" (Eichah 1:1), he responded, "But I will still be king!" When the attendant read, "She weeps bitterly in the night" (Eichah 1:2), the king responded again, "But I will still be king!" The king responded the same way to the next two verses of the prophecy that were read to him. Then, when the fifth verse was read to him, "Her enemies have become her leaders" (Eichah 1:5) -- clearly stating that the king would be deposed -- Yehoyakim reacted angrily and tore apart the scroll, cutting out the names of Hashem and throwing them into a fire.

Yehoyakim was not upset even when he heard that the whole city would be destroyed. Only when he heard his kingship being challenged did he become upset. Apparently, he did not care what was going to happen to everyone else, as long as he would remain the king. What consolation did his kingship offer him though -- "there is no king without a nation!" (See BEN YEHOYADA)

ANSWER: RAV YONASAN EIBESHITZ (in YA'AROS DEVASH 1:13) offers an original explanation. For each prophecy relating that Hashem would punish the people, Yehoyakim said that he was not worried. The reason he was not worried was because he knew that a prophecy foretelling a bad occurrence can be revoked (through Teshuvah), as the RAMBAM writes in his Introduction to the Mishnah (based on Bereishis Raba).

However, when he heard, "Her enemies have become her leaders" he became upset, because that was a prophecy foretelling a *good* occurrence -- from the perspective of the nations that would rule -- and a prophecy foretelling good is never revoked (Rambam, *ibid.*)!

Moed Katan 28 CELEBRATING A BIRTHDAY OPINIONS: The Gemara quotes Rabah who says that if one dies between the ages of fifty and sixty, this is the death of Kares. The Gemara relates that Rav Yosef made a celebration when he reached his sixtieth birthday, since he had passed the period of Kares.

Is celebrating one's sixtieth birthday a practice that should be followed? What about celebrating any birthday?

(a) A number of authorities (as cited in MINHAG YISRAEL TORAH by Rav Yosef Lewy, OC 225) write that there is reason to make some sort of celebration upon reaching a certain age, as we see from Rav Yosef's conduct in our Gemara. The CHAVAS YA'IR (#70), cited by the CHASAM SOFER on the Shulchan Aruch (OC 225:10), writes that upon reaching one's *seventieth* birthday, one should make a Se'udah and recite the blessing of "Shehecheyanu," since he has reached a full lifespan. The Chasam Sofer himself says that one should recite the blessing without the name of Hashem.

The KAF HA'CHAIM (223:29) writes that upon reaching one's *sixtieth* birthday, one should recite the blessing of "Shehecheyanu" upon a new fruit and have in mind that he is also reciting the blessing for having been saved from Kares. A source for this is the LEKET YOSHER, who relates that the TERUMAS HA'DESHEN, whenever he would make a Siyum on a Maseches, would invite men who had reached their sixtieth birthday and have them participate in his Se'udah in order to fulfill their obligation to give thanks for reaching the age of sixty.

The BEIS YISRAEL (#32) says that it is proper to make a Se'udah on one's *eightieth* birthday, since that is the age at which one has not only passed the age of Kares as it relates to the years of one's life, but has also passed the age of Kares as it relates to shortening one's lifespan (as Abaye asked Rav Yosef in our Gemara). He says that the reason people do not make such celebrations is probably because they are afraid of an "Ayin ha'Ra," and therefore they do not reveal their age.

Some authorities also permit specifically celebrating one's birthday every year. The BEN ISH CHAI (Vayera #17) writes that it is a good practice to celebrate one's birthday, "and so is the practice in our homes." Similarly, RAV YOSEF ENGEL in the GINZEI YOSEF (#4) writes that men of piety recite the blessing of "Shehecheyanu" on a new fruit or a new garment each year on their birthday. The KESAV SOFER (YD 148) writes that it was his practice to make a Siyum on a Maseches on his birthday. (It is said that the CHAFETZ CHAIM celebrated birthday parties every year during his later years, to demonstrate publicly that those who guard their tongue are rewarded with long life.)

(b) There are those, however, who renounce making such celebrations. The ARUGAS HA'BOSEM (215) writes that it is improper to make a celebration upon reaching a certain age, such as seventy, for that is the "practice of boors who walk in the ways of the other nations." The reason, he says, is because the Mishnah (Avos 3:1) states that one should realize where his eventual end will be and that he will have to give a reckoning of all of his deeds before Hashem. When one reaches the age of seventy and is coming close to that frightful moment of truth, it is certainly not an occasion to rejoice, but to tremble in a fear.

It is cited in the name of the Rebbe of Satmar (DIVREI TORAH 5:88) that it is not the practice of Jews to make birthday celebrations. The reason he gives is because the Gemara in Eruvin (13b) concludes that it would have been better had man not been created. That is because once he is created, there are so many Mitzvos for him to do and so many Aveiros for him to avoid, that it is very difficult to return his soul to his Maker in a pure and unstained state. Therefore, it is inappropriate to celebrate the day on which we were born. This applies, though, only to Jews, who have the responsibility of observing the Mitzvos. Non-Jews, though, certainly may celebrate their birthdays, since they were only entrusted with the Seven Mitzvos of Bnei Noach, and thus being created is not such a liability for them. This is why we find in the Torah that Pharaoh celebrated his birthday (Bereishis 40:20), while Avraham Avinu celebrated only the day on which he performed the Mitzvah of Milah for his son Yitzchak (Chasam Sofer to Bereishis 21:9).

It should be noted, though, that even these opinions -- which say that there is no reason to make a special celebration on one's birthday -- agree that there is a special element to that day and therefore one should increase his Torah and his Tefilah on that day, as well as increase one's acts of charity (RAV CHAIM PALAGI in TZEDAKAH L'CHAIM). This is because on one's birthday, one's Mazal is empowered (as the CHIDA (Chomas Anach to Iyov 3) and KORBAN HA'EDAHA (Yerushalmi Rosh Hashanah 3:8) write). Moreover, those opinions which permit celebrating one's birthday agree that it should not be celebrated in a frivolous, light-hearted manner, but that one should direct his focus to expressing gratitude to Hashem for keeping him alive.

Moed Katan 29 AGADAH: PARTING WITH ONE'S FRIEND: "L'SHALOM" AND NOT "B'SHALOM" QUESTION: The Gemara tells us that when one parts with his friends, they should bless each other that they may travel "peacefully" (l'Shalom) and not just "in peace" (b'Shalom). The VILNA GAON (as quoted by the Pardes Yosef) explains, based on this, the following verse at the beginning of Vayeshev: "The brothers [were so upset with Yosef that they] could not speak with him *peacefully* (l'Shalom)." Out of their contempt for Yosef, they could not bring themselves to bless Yosef with the word "l'Shalom," as one does to the living.

If one is not supposed to bless his friend with the word "b'Shalom" upon parting, why did

Yakov (in Parshas Vayetze) ask Hashem to return him "in peace" ("b'Shalom") to his father's home?

ANSWERS: (a) Why is it preferable to bless the living with the word "T'Shalom?" The SEMICHAS CHACHAMIM (on Berachos, by the author of the Megaleh Amukos) explains that a living person must never stay on the same spiritual level. He must always be climbing and accomplishing. A dead person, on the other hand, has already attained whatever spiritual level it is that he will reach. That is why we wish the living to go "towards peace" ("T'Shalom"), that is, towards a greater and holier spiritual level, while we wish the not-living to "rest *in* peace" (b'Shalom).

This is why Yakov did not use the usual phraseology in his Tefilah. Normally, we wish the other person that he may rise higher and higher upon parting with us. Yakov, by saying "b'Shalom," meant to say "I will even be satisfied if I return from the house of Lavan on the *same* spiritual level that I am at present [without being affected by the wickedness of Lavan]." (KOHELES YITZCHAK on Parashas Vayetze)

(b) The RITVA and CHIDUSHEI HA'RAN here explain the difference between "T'Shalom" and "b'Shalom" differently. When one says "go *in* peace," it implies that only while traveling should there be peace. It does not relate to what happens upon arrival at the destination. That is why it is not an appropriate blessing to the living; one should also bless the traveler to *arrive at his destination* in peace, by saying "go *towards* peace." "Ba'Shalom" is, however, an appropriate blessing to the deceased, since his destination is certainly peaceful and it is the "road there" which is fearful (as the Gemara describes on the bottom of Moed Katan 28a).

Is so, perhaps our Gemara's teaching applies only when the word "Lech" -- "go" -- is used with the word "b'Shalom," denoting that the traveling [alone] should be in peace. However, Yakov said, "I should *return* b'Shalom," meaning that *when he arrives back home* he should be in peace. Thus, in the context, it was an appropriate expression.

(c) Alternatively, perhaps Yakov was indeed requesting to be returned to his father's house *after death*, and that is why he used the word "b'Shalom." That is, he was asking Hashem to allow him to be buried in the Cave of Machpelah along with his father. This wish was granted to him when Esav accepted all of Yakov's wealth in return for his portion in the Cave (see Rashi, Bereishis 50:5). (M. Kornfeld)

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