

From EfraimG@aol.com
Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet
Chayei Sarah 5769

Mazal Tov to Helen Bohorodzaner & the entire extended Bohorodzaner family on the upcoming wedding of Jana to Daniel Friedman

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UNEXPECTED CHANGES :: Rabbi Berel Wein

Having always preached in my life to myself and to others that the only certainty in life is uncertainty itself, I was not surprised, though still slightly frustrated, when my flight plans were radically changed by some circumstances beyond my control. Tickets had to be exchanged, taxis reordered, and pickups at my arrival destinations completely rearranged. I reckoned that about twenty people had to rearrange their schedules because of my enforced change of plans.

We are ill equipped emotionally to deal with the unexpected though all of us are buffeted by the unexpected repeatedly in our lives. We are surprised and disappointed when things do not go as planned though in reality we should be surprised and delighted when plans do work out. Murphy's famous law that whatever can go wrong will eventually go wrong has more than a grain of truth to it. And we are all aware of the famous maxim about the best laid plans of mice and men.

In short, we should learn to expect the unexpected and be able to deal with it as it arises, as it surely will. In an uncertain world, uncertainty will always reign. It is the person who is flexible and who easily adjusts to new circumstances that will be most successful in life. Those who are irretrievably set in their ways will find life to be enormously frustrating, disappointing and depressing.

Often this mindset of rigidity leads to domestic discord, business failure and even social violence. It is this inability to cope with the constantly changing world that causes enormous problems in human and national society. We should be aware and wary of this.

The Jewish people have had to be the most adjustable and flexible of nations in having to deal with the centuries of change that it faced. In certain areas the Jewish people were very successful in dealing with these unexpected changes. They learned to adjust to exile, persecution, Christianity and Islam without sacrificing their central core beliefs and practices rooted in the eternal Torah. They created languages, societies and vital movements within the Jewish society all within the parameters of Jewish tradition and Torah values.

However the unexpected changes caused by the rise of the ideas of the eighteenth century European Enlightenment posed great challenges which the Jewish world is struggling with until today. Modernity, democracy, scientific discoveries and new theories regarding nature, astronomy, creation and human behavior and psyche all posed and still pose today challenges to traditional Judaism that were not present for many previous centuries.

Traditional Jewish thought was blindsided by the onslaught of the ideas and new certainties of that Enlightenment. Many of those certainties of the Enlightenment itself have been proved wrong by further changing circumstances. The Enlightenment was certain that education was the key to solve all human problems. Yet in the Holocaust a high proportion of the executives of the Nazi death camps were PhD's and MD's. What about the great believers in Communism, Lenin, Stalin and the Marxist wave of the future? The difficulty to deal with unexpected changes is not restricted to traditional Judaism.

The sweep of secularism and assimilation that swept the Jewish world in the wake of the ideas of modernity forced traditional Judaism to take a conservative, defensive view of its world. Paradoxically, this at one and the same time saved the core of the Jewish people from spiritual destruction while at the same time it weakened its ability to have to deal with newly unexpectedly changing circumstances.

There is no doubt that our world today after the Holocaust, the creation and growth of the State of Israel, and the vast changes in the Jewish Diaspora, is a completely different world than that of Eastern European Jewry in the

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet somehow we have not adjusted to these sea changes in our condition. We will undoubtedly be challenged by even further unexpected changes that will fall upon us.

There will be no avoiding these changes, just as one cannot be on a flight that an airline has cancelled. (Take my word for the accuracy of that last statement!)

Flexibility and adjustment to changing circumstances and societal norms will be demanded of us. We must preserve the Torah at all costs and it cannot be preserved by violating it – driving to the synagogue on Shabat only eventually helped destroy the Shabat and weaken the synagogue. Yet we cannot recreate seventeenth century shtetl Eastern Europe. How we will deal with these unexpected, and yet certain to come, changes in our world will define our mettle and success.

Shabat shalom.

Weekly Parsha :: CHAYEI SARAH :: Rabbi Berel Wein

This week's parsha represents the constant human drama of death and renewal, of grieving over what has been irretrievably lost and soldiering on to make life productive and meaningful. To Avraham the husband, Sarah is irreplaceable. He remarries and has many children from that union but he is constantly reminded of God's statement that only through Yitzchak, the son of Sarah, is he guaranteed continuity of his ideas and values and immortality.

Sarah will live on only through Yitzchak, and Avraham realizes that his future is also dependent solely on Sarah's immortality. Perhaps that is why the parsha is entitled Chayei Sarah – the life of Sarah – when the parsha deals apparently only with the death of Sarah. For it is the life, so to speak, of Sarah after her death, that she still lives on through her son Yitzchak that is the centerpiece of the parsha.

There is a basic human drive within all of us that reflects itself in our wanting to be remembered after we are no longer alive on this earth. I saw once the most poignant tombstone inscription I ever read over the grave of a young woman who died in her twenties. It simply stated: "Please don't forget me."

Avraham weeps and grieves and eulogizes his beloved Sarah. But he cannot guarantee her memory will be part of the Jewish experience. Only Yitzchak can do that and that is why the bulk of the parsha then describes the effort to find for a proper mate for Yitzchak that will validate Sarah's heritage and values. Avraham's true eulogy for Sarah lies in helping Yitzchak reestablish Sarah's tent and life mission.

Rashi points out the well-known Midrash that when Rivkah entered the tent of Sarah, all of the spiritual greatness that was present in Sarah's tent and disappeared at the time of her death reappeared with the entry of Rivkah into Yitzchak's life.

Sarah is truly irreplaceable but her continuity is assured because of Yitzchak and Rivkah. No human being is truly replaceable but no human being is indispensable to the continuity of God's mission and work on this earth. The next generation is always charged with building upon the legacy that it received from previous generations. Its task is not only that it should create a society that will remember it but that that society will also remember all of the previous generations that preceded it.

Yitzchak and Rivkah will be remembered eternally only if through them Avraham and Sarah are also remembered and preserved. This concept is undoubtedly the source of the Ashkenazic custom of naming new born children after their deceased ancestors. The new baby is immediately challenged to represent and remember, so to speak, the past generation that has departed.

The parsha describes for us the life of Yitzchak but it is entitled Chayei Sarah, the life of Sarah, for only in Yitzchak's life does Sarah truly live on. Thus every Jewish home that carries forth the traditions of Jewish life and values is transformed into the tent of our eternal mother Sarah.

TORAH WEEKLY—Parshat Chayei Sara
For the week ending 22 November 2008 / 24 Heshvan 5769
from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu
by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

OVERVIEW

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

INSIGHTS

SuperHero

“And I will have you swear” (24:3)

In a more modest world, mild-mannered Clark Kent would discreetly slip into a phone booth, tear off his shirt and reveal his true identity, Superman. If truth be known, we can all be Superman.

Within us exist tremendous untapped powers. There are several well-documented cases of mothers lifting motorcars to save the lives of their children, or running at superwoman speeds to rescue their offspring from wild animals.

Ostensibly, these were ordinary folk, suddenly possessed of superhuman strength. G-d has put inside us enormous powers but most of the time we do not, or cannot, access them. Why?

In this weeks Torah portion, Avraham makes his servant Eliezer swear not to seek a wife for Yitzchak from the Cananites “rather, to my land and to my kindred shall you go and take a wife for my son”

If Avraham doubted Eliezers loyalty, why send him in the first place? And if Eliezers loyalty was beyond question, what was the need for an oath?

Avraham realized that it might not be easy to find a wife for Yitzchak. He made Eliezer swear so that if the going got tough, Eliezer would reach down into hidden reservoirs of persistence and continue the search.

Nothing substitutes for the will to succeed. Our mindset is very often our greatest enemy. Lack of self-esteem and/or self-confidence limits our ability to take wing and fulfill our potential.

A Jew is supposed to say to himself every day “When will my actions reach the actions of my fathers Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov?” When we compare ourselves to these giants we are reminding ourselves of the spiritual legacy locked inside us, which would, if we would only let it, send us looking for the nearest telephone booth to reveal our superman costume to the world.

Source:Based on the Shem MiShmuel

Written and compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

PARSHAS CHAYEI SARAH

And Avraham weighed out to Ephron the silver...four hundred shekel of silver. (23:16)

Avraham Avinu was conflicted. His beloved Sarah, our Matriarch, had just passed away, and he needed a burial plot. Ephron seemed to have the land most suitable for a gravesite. Being a "kind and benevolent" person, Ephron charged Avraham an outrageous price for the small plot of land.

Avraham did not haggle. He paid what he was asked. The fact that he charged an exorbitant price was of no consequence to Ephron. He was a businessman. The Ramban, however, adds that Avraham paid with the "generosity of his heart." How was generosity involved? This was a simple business transaction. Ephron had what Avraham needed. Avraham had the money that Ephron wanted. The shidduch, match, was made. How did generosity play a role in this negotiation?

Horav A. Henach Leibowitz, zl, explains that the generosity is not measured by the amount of money Avraham paid, but by the manner in which he paid for this expensive purchase. He understood that the most appropriate place to bury Sarah was in the Meoras HaMachpelah, together with Adam and Chavah. Sarah belonged there. Once he had determined that the transaction was essential, he executed it wholeheartedly and joyously. The fact that Ephron was taking advantage of the Patriarch's emotions by charging him an outlandish price did not affect Avraham's demeanor. He needed the land. Ephron possessed the land. What did the parties need to discuss?

How often does it occur that we need something, and we decide that this item is a necessity in our lives. Yet, we have a problem parting with our money. Clinging to our material assets often prevents us from completing critical transactions. At times, the price is not exorbitant. It is a fair, reasonable price, one that we can afford. The problem: We cannot tolerate enabling someone to make a large profit from our money. This is the way of a miser who hordes his wealth and never spends a penny, regardless of his needs.

The following vignette summarizes this concept. A man paid one dollar to a miser, so that he could gaze momentarily at the man's immense treasure. Staring at the piles of gold and precious jewels, he turned to the miser and said, "Now I am as wealthy as you are. All of the enjoyment that you derive from your money is from looking. You never spend it. Others certainly derive no benefit from your money. You are not aware of its real value, because you never make use of it."

Avraham demonstrated the way we should act concerning money. Once we develop a clearer understanding of his perspective on wealth, we will be more capable of dealing with the daily challenges of the difficult economic issues confronting society today. Money is Hashem's gift to us for one purpose: to fulfill His mitzvos. Therefore, spending money injudiciously is wasting Hashem's gift. The Chazon Ish was wont to say that we should be prepared to part with one million dollars with as much ease as if it were one hundred dollars. Likewise, we should be scrupulous in not wasting even a penny of our money.

Indeed, this may be derived from Yaakov Avinu, who, when confronted by Elifaz, Eisav's son, gave him everything, so that he would not harm him. Yaakov was on a mission for Hashem, a mission that would come to an abrupt end if he were to be taken captive or die in battle. Therefore, he was prepared to do whatever was necessary to save himself from Eisav. On the other hand, he went back to his earlier camp during the dark, desolate night to retrieve some inexpensive pottery. Money is valuable when it is used for a higher purpose. Yaakov would not waste anything. After all, it was not his to waste. Hashem gave it to him for a purpose.

Last, we must recognize that wealth is not measured by how much money we have in the bank or by the size of our stock portfolio. The barometer of wealth is in the good deeds we perform with it. The value of our money is commensurate with the deeds for which we use it. All too often we begin to view money as an end in its own right - not merely a means towards attaining a greater end. When we fall in love with money and its pursuit, we become victims of greed, driving ourselves into lives of misery and dissatisfaction. We seem to never have enough money, because we always want more. When our desire for money is insatiable, when we become its slave, it ruins our life. J.P. Morgan was once asked, "When has a man made enough money to be happy?" He replied with a smile, "When he has made the next million." Chazal teach us that one who has one hundred, must now have two hundred. He is obsessed with money and will never be happy, because he will never have enough of it.

When the philanthropist, Bernard Baruch, made his first million dollars, he went to inform his father. Surprisingly, his father did not seem impressed. "I am not even thirty," said Bernard, "and I have already made my first

million - and you are not even happy?" "No, my son," replied his father, "I am not impressed. What I want to know is: How you will you spend the money that you have earned?"

And he said, Whose daughter are you? ...She said to him, "I am the daughter of Besuel." (24:23,24)

Eliezer, servant of Avraham, based his selection of a wife for Yitzchak upon two criteria: first, in accordance with the demand of his master, Avraham Avinu, that the young lady be of his family and not of the pagan Canaanites; second, that the young lady exhibit a unique sense of chesed, kindness, in her actions. Let us try to digest this idea. The test of family is a momentary one, which can be confirmed with a simple question. The chesed test obviously takes much longer and must be administered under specific conditions, as spelled out by Eliezer. If so, the first thing Eliezer should have done was to question every girl that he met concerning her pedigree. Why should he have spent time on the lengthy chesed test, if the girl's lineage had not yet been confirmed? The sequence seems to be backward, with Eliezer testing the girl for chesed before asking about her family background.

Horav Eliezer Sorotzkin, zl, explains that the litmus test for chesed, which descends into the deepest recesses of one's neshamah, soul, can only be tendered if the subject of the test remains anonymous. Had Eliezer followed the sequence suggested by common sense, first ascertaining her lineage, then whatever act of chesed she performed could have been something which was required and expected of a member of such a distinguished family. No longer could he perceive her act of chesed to be an isolated, altruistic act of kindness by a truly kind and sensitive person. Now he might view it to be an act of kindness that was compelled by family pressure to act in a certain manner. Eliezer did not want a fake. He sought the real thing: a sincere act of loving-kindness.

Therefore, he neither introduced himself, nor asked her for her background information. Her actions were not forced; they represented Rivka's true character.

This is the difference between a baal chesed, an individual who possesses chesed as an intrinsic part of his personality, and an individual who simply performs chesed. Many people act kindly and perform benevolent acts, ministering to the needs of those who are less fortunate than they are. Various motivations catalyze their acts of kindness. Some of the people are individuals who have the time and are willing to help. Others might like the attention. Then there is the baal chesed who looks for opportunities to do chesed simply because he loves chesed. Helping others is what he is all about. He does not sit back and wait until he is asked to help; he volunteers at every opportunity that avails itself. Avraham Avinu was the amud ha'chesed, pillar of chesed. When the opportunity to help presented itself, he was available. When the opportunity was not there, he sought it out, because he loved chesed. This is the middah, attribute, which he bequeathed to his descendants. It is up to us to make proper use of our inheritance.

My father-in-law, Reb Zalmen Brunner, was such an individual. Although I never had the privilege of knowing him, I recently had the singular opportunity to meet with Rav Chaskel Besser, one of the pillars of Orthodoxy in this country, a member of the Presidium of Agudath Israel, and a good friend and associate of my father-in-law. He has an uncanny ability to recall myriad events and personalities with whom he has had a relationship throughout the years. Truly one of Hashem's gifts to this generation, he is a living legend of dedication to Klal Yisrael. I asked him to relate something special, a unique insight, a personal character trait, about my father-in-law that I could convey to his descendants that would serve as a lasting inspiration. While it is true that he was involved in Vaad Hatzalah rescue efforts, saving Jewish children from the clutches of the Nazis, and he was instrumental together with the Bobover Rebbe, zl, in establishing Bobover Chassidus in America, it was something exclusive to him that I was seeking.

Rav Besser old me, "Some people perform chesed because it's a mitzvah, or because it is the correct thing to do. Reb Zalman loved people and loved doing chesed. It was 'him.' He had an overwhelming desire to help whenever the opportunity arose. He would look for opportunities, because

he cared so much about others." He was a baal chesed, with chesed being intrinsically bound up in his character.

And Yitzchak brought her into the tent of his mother, Sarah, and he took Rivkah and she was to him a wife and he loved her. (24:67)

The Midrash notes that when Sarah Imeinu was alive, a cloud hovered over the entrance to her tent. During her lifetime, all of the doors of the tent were open wide. Also, during her lifetime, a blessing was inherent in her dough. With her passing, these three phenomena ceased. When Yitzchak Avinu brought Rivkah into the tent, they returned. Last, the Midrash says that during all of the days that Sarah lived, a lamp remained lit from the night of Shabbos until the night of Shabbos. Once she died it ceased, only to return when Rivkah Imeinu entered the tent as Yitzchak's wife.

Horav Aharon Soloveitchik, zl, suggests that these unique phenomena represent the sublime ideals to which every Jewish home should aspire. The last occurrence, the light remaining lit from Shabbos to Shabbos, symbolizes the ideal of the Shabbos spirit permeating the Jewish home the entire week. The essence of the Shabbos spirit is yom menuchah u'kedushah, "a day of rest and sanctity." In every Jewish home, an atmosphere of serenity and holiness should prevail throughout the entire week. It should be the spirit that reigns throughout the home, in the family, and in their outlook on life in general.

Chazal teach us, "If only Yisrael would keep two Shabbosos according to halachah, they would be immediately redeemed." Why two Shabbosos? Would not one suffice as a symbol of their devotion to this holy day? Rav Soloveitchik explains that Chazal are actually referring to one Shabbos day and the extension of its spirit to the remainder of the week, so that every day becomes illuminated with the sanctity and restful spirit of Shabbos. Only then will Klal Yisrael be redeemed.

The blessing in the dough is a reference to Chazal's statement in Pirkei Avos (4:1): "Who is wealthy? He who is happy with his lot." The brachah, blessing, built into the dough consists of the satisfaction that reigned with whatever material goods they possessed. Such an idea clearly needs no further explanation concerning its positive ramifications in the home. Likewise, the door being opened especially wide needs no further elucidation. A wide opening of a home implies the family's dedication to the attribute of chesed, kindness. This should be the hallmark of every Jewish home.

We now turn to the cloud hovering over Sarah's tent. Cloudy days are considered unpleasant, serving as a metaphor for difficult times. The cloud hovering over the tent symbolizes the sacrifices that each member of a Jewish household must be prepared to make one for another. No home goes unscathed, while some have regrettably a greater share of difficult and challenging experiences. The only way to maintain and preserve the ideal Jewish home is for all of its members to maintain a sense of fortitude and a willingness to give of themselves for the benefit of others.

Sarah Imeinu's home personified the quintessential Jewish home, but it all disappeared with her passing. It was only after Yitzchak brought his bashert, Heavenly-designated wife, that all of its characteristics that lent themselves to preserving this unique phenomenon returned with the arrival of the new akeros ha'bayis, foundation of the home.

And Avraham expired and died at a good old age. (25:8)

Yishmael repented in his later years. He even allowed Yitzchak, his younger brother, to precede him at their father, Avraham Avinu's, funeral. Rashi cites the Talmud Bava Basra 16b that interprets this nachas, satisfaction in life, seeing his son Yishmael repent, get along and even give respect to his younger brother, as the seivah tovah, good old age, that Avraham enjoyed. This is a new insight into the definition of "good" old age. When one has nachas, when he sees his children getting along, following in the ways of Hashem that is "good" old age. Children who do not acknowledge this very simple idea deprive their parents of their "good" old age. Clearly, Hashem did not grant them long life to suffer in silence, as their children destroy everything they had taught them.

Having said that, we return to Yishmael, the baal teshuvah, who demonstrates that regardless of how far one has strayed, how much he has alienated himself from the Torah way, he can return. Embedded deep within the recesses of one's soul is the Pintele Yid, the spark of Judaism, through which he cries out to Hashem - and Hashem listens. Even a rasha,

wicked, evil person-- whose life is dedicated to destroying his and others' relationship with Hashem-- can return. Hashem will welcome him home with extended and open arms.

Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl, related the story of a certain rasha, wicked person, a kofer, agnostic, who did everything to denigrate the religion in which he was raised. He became seriously ill to the point that, after consultation with the most distinguished physicians in Koenigsburg, it was determined that his only chance for survival was surgery. Veritably, surgery was not the cure all, nor was it guaranteed, but, without it, the patient had no chance whatsoever.

The problem was that, as aggressive and loud as the person was when it came to demeaning his religion, he was a total opposite concerning himself. He was a coward, meek and insecure. Thus, he refused to have the surgery. If so, the doctors demanded that he leave the hospital. His behavior bordered on suicidal and they were not interested in taking responsibility for his imminent death. Finally, the man relented and agreed to have the surgery.

One can imagine the shock of all those present when the patient, as he was being wheeled into surgery, amidst trembling and trepidation, shrieked, B'yadcha afkid ruchi padissa osi Hashem Keil emes.

This was followed with a resounding Shema Yisrael. The doctors and family members who observed this sudden changing of heart could not believe what they heard and saw. The emotion, coupled with these verses emanating from the mouth of a hardened agnostic, jarred their senses. Indeed, everybody present was so captivated by the sudden expression of faith that they also were disquieted and filled with a sense of awe and trepidation. The pain and anxiety that this man was undergoing awakened his inner emotions and the Pintele Yid, spark of Jewish faith, within the hidden recesses of his soul burst forth. Rav Elya concluded, "Do not think that any man is lost forever. There is hope for everyone, regardless of his miscreant past. There is a path of teshuvah, return, which anyone can follow. It just depends on what motivates him to begin the journey back home."

How does teshuvah work? After all, we live in a physical world, a sensory, three dimensional world, in which a person's actions take place in a particular confluence of time and space which will never occur again. Thus, once the sin is committed, it is finished; it cannot be undone; it cannot be uncommitted. How can teshuvah erase one's misdeeds?

Horav Shlomo Freifeld, zl, explains that it all goes back to Creation, when Hashem created the world ex nihilo, from nothingness. This generative force of creation was not locked up and put away. It exists within the cosmos, accessible to anyone who reaches out to it. Indeed, the human being can reach out and access this wonderful force and recreate himself! It is called the power of teshuvah. This force allows a person to regenerate himself until all of the flaws and blemishes caused by his sins disappear.

Teshuvah is much more than an act of frumkeit, piety. It is an opportunity to draw on the incredible creative power that exists within the cosmos. It is a cleansing process of renewal and rejuvenation which washes away the spiritual grime of sin that sticks to a person.

It transforms the sinner into a new entity - a new pure person. Bearing this in mind, one's sins do not have to hold a person captive for life. He can escape and change, becoming a new and improved person. It is never too late. As long as a person breathes, he has the power to restore and regenerate himself. Teshuvah works instantaneously. As soon as a person makes up his mind to repent, the process has begun, and he is already transforming himself. When we begin to look at teshuvah through a spiritual lens, it all makes sense. This is why no person is lost. He is only one change of heart away from becoming a new person.

And Avraham expired and died...His sons Yitzchak and Yishmael buried him. (25:8,9)

Rashi infers from the fact that the elder brother, Yishmael, deferred to Yitzchak, his younger brother, giving him precedence at the funeral for their father, that Yishmael ultimately had repented from his life of immorality and corruption. Eisav, on the other hand, forced himself ahead of Yaakov at Yitzchak's funeral, indicating that he had not changed his orientation even as he aged. He left this world as evil as he had lived it. What made the difference in the lives of Yishmael and Eisav, both children

"at risk"? Why did one repent, while the other took his evil to the grave, leaving a legacy of anti-semitism for his descendants to follow?

Parenthood is a privilege which carries enormous responsibility. One of the most difficult functions of parenthood is administering positive discipline. In a perfect world, children grow up without creating any problems: not causing any heartache; reacting positively in school; and growing up as a credit to their upbringing and a source of nachas to their family and community. Regrettably, we do not live in a perfect world. Children will be children, and this means that they will need to be disciplined as part of the child-rearing process. How this discipline is meted out can catalyze the difference in the end result - the future adult.

Discipline must be administered with love, with corporeal punishment utilized only as a last resort and never out of anger. One who does not discipline an errant child plays a critical role in that child's growing up to be a flawed adult. Indeed, a lack of discipline is analogous to misplaced or misguided discipline.

Having said this, the Alter, zl, m'Slabodka, addresses the disparity between Yishmael and Eisav, both evil from the "get go," but one of them turning around later in life. As youths, they were both sources of concern and misery for their parents. They worshipped idols, were immoral and exhibited no respect for the value of human life. Yet, Yishmael repented in his later years, while Eisav died as the symbol of evil incarnate that he was. Yishmael respected Avraham, while Eisav did not really respect Yitzchak. Perhaps he put on a good show, acting out his ruse, but there certainly was no substance to his respect. We even find a Tanna whose name was Rabbi Yishmael, while the name Eisav goes down in infamy. Why did one seem to "make it," while the other did not?

The Alter attributes Yishmael's turnaround to positive discipline. When Avraham Avinu became aware of Yishmael's nefarious behavior, he sent him away from the house. True, he was following Sarah Imeinu's "suggestion" but he listened and immediately acted.

Eisav, however, was not disciplined. He was not even chastised. He put on a show of fake piety, while he went along his merry way of committing atrocities and vile deeds with impunity. Since he was never moved to repent, he did not. Thus, he left this world setting the standard for evil. His evil was surreptitious, which often goes unnoticed and, thus, undisciplined. Discipline tendered with love will turn a child around and make the defining difference in his success as an adult. Through the medium of positive discipline, a child learns what is wrong and develops a healthy respect for his parents' values. The child that grows up without discipline is deprived of the opportunity for true growth.

Va'ani Tefillah

Poseiach es Yadecha u'masbia l'chol chai ratzon.

Open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living being.

Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, explains this pasuk in a unique manner. He says that the word ratzon, which is translated here as desire, actually should be rendered as goodwill or benevolence, as in yehi ratzon echav, "he shall be pleasing to his brothers" (Devarim 33:24) or yehi ratzon milfanecha, "Let it be Your will." The meaning of ratzon would, therefore, be finding favor with others or being well-liked. Hashem provides a person with goodwill and favorable acceptance in the eyes of others, which is the prerequisite for all livelihood. Regardless of a person's station in life, the finding of favor with others is what most often results in one's establishing a livelihood. This is a miracle which comes directly from Hashem. Every time one succeeds in his relationship with others, it is because Hashem gave him ratzon in their eyes. Everything is based upon "customer service," the favor one has before others. The secret of parnassah is known only to Hashem. He decides who should find ratzon, favor, in the eyes of others. He satiates all of life with ratzon by allowing people to find favor and goodwill in the eyes of others.

I'zchus u'l'refuah sheleima for Miriam Zissel bas Feiga Baila shetichye By Moshe and Michele Luger

**Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Chayei Sarah
From Where Did Avraham Come?**

A famous Medrash Rabbah on this week's parsha (58:5) cites the pasuk [verse] "And Avraham came to mourn for Sarah and to cry for her" [Bereshis 23:3]. The Medrash asks "From where did he come?" Rav Levi answers that he came from the burial of Terach his father. Rav Yossi questions this explanation by virtue of the fact that Terach died two years before Sarah and offers the alternate explanation that Avraham came from (the Akeidah on) Mt. Moriah.

Rabbeinu Bechaya deals with this same issue, and sheds new light for us on the dispute quoted by the Medrash. Had scripture wished to tell us that Avraham came from a certain place, it would have named the place. The fact that the pasuk states simply "Avraham came" without specifying a place of origin indicates that it was not important to indicate any geographic point of departure. Rather, the intent is to indicate that Avraham reached a certain level of inspiration in eulogizing his wife. When a person is inspired to do something, the Torah uses the expression "he is coming to it". "And Avraham came to mourn for Sarah" indicates that he was motivated to eulogize her for some specific reason.

Rabbeinu Bechaya explains that in order to address this question, the Medrash quotes the difference of opinion between Rav Levi and Rav Yossi. Rav Levi and Rav Yossi are not answering the question: "Where did Avraham come from?" Rather, they are answering the question "What was the inspiration that brought him to eulogize his wife Sarah?" Rav Levi says the inspiration came from the funeral of Terach. Rav Yossi insisted that any such inspiration would have worn off after two years; rather it must have come from Mt. Moriah where he had recently experienced the Akeida.

What was the inspiration that Avraham received at the Akeida that moved him to eulogize his wife? As much as one knows one's wife, Avraham sensed greatness in Sarah at the Akeida that he had never before sensed. If one has a 37-year-old son and tells him "G-d told me to slaughter you" and the son is prepared to listen and willingly be slaughtered, that speaks volumes about the son, but it also speaks volumes about the mother that raised such a son. For a person who is told by his father that it is time for him to be killed on the altar – even though it flies in the face of everything he knows – to comply with his father's order is not a natural phenomenon, to put it mildly. Yitzchak was only able to withstand this great test because of the attribute of Emunas Chachomim [belief in the words of the Sages] that his mother inculcated in him from his earliest youth.

Using similar logic, we can now understand the viewpoint of Rav Levi who interpreted "When Avraham came" to mean he came from the funeral of Terach. Of course Rav Levi realized that the eulogy of Terach was two years prior to Sarah's passing. But Rav Levi was saying that the greatness of Sarah was even more astounding to Avraham because of the eulogy of Terach. Avraham Avinu knew where he came from. He knew that his father was an idolater. Avraham reasoned that he himself had the fortune to see the light of truth in his life. But it by no means would obviously follow that his children would likewise come to the same conclusion. Given who his father was and who he came from, it was not a simple matter that his son turned out the way he did. Considering what his spiritual DNA was all about, the fact that he had a son like Yitzchak who was willing to be offered upon on Altar of G-d was not something he took for granted. This speaks even more volumes about Sarah's greatness as a mother and role model.

Basically, Rav Levi and Rav Yossi are conveying the same idea. Avraham was inspired to eulogize Sarah because of the great son who she raised. After having just experienced the Akeida and being reminded of Yitzchak's idolatrous ancestry, Avraham recognized the great role Sarah played in making Yitzchak who he was.

Where Was Yitzchak?

In the same passage, Rabbeinu Bechaya raises the following issue: Where was Yitzchak when this eulogy and burial took place? Rabbeinu Bechaya suggests that Yitzchak was not immediately aware of the death of his mother. Sarah's death (according to the Medrash) was due to the shock at hearing of Yitzchak's near death experience at the Akeida. Having thus been indirectly responsible for her passing, the news of this tragedy was hidden from him for the time being. Rabbeinu Bechaya further suggests that during the entire 3 year gap from the time of the Akeida (when he was

37) until the time that he married Rivka (at age 40), Yitzchak remained at Mt. Moriah.

Others quote an alternate suggestion as to Yitzchak's whereabouts during this period, in the name of the Zohar. The Zohar records that Yitzchak was actually injured during the Akeida, and the Angels took him to Gan Eden during this period until he recovered from those wounds. Furthermore, it is based on this experience that Yitzchak later was able to identify the aroma of the coat of his son Eisav as being equivalent to the aroma of the Garden of Eden [Bereshis 27:27]: "See, the fragrance of my son is like the fragrance of a field which Hashem has blessed".

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

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Rabbi Yonason Sacks (The TorahWeb Foundation)

Faith and Reliance

The Gemarah (Berachos 7a) teaches: "Every statement uttered by HaKadosh Baruch Hu in a person's favor, even if formulated on a particular condition, will not be rescinded." In citing this Gemarah, the Rambam notes (Introduction to the Perush HaMishnayos) that it appears to contradict an earlier Gemarah in the very same Masechta. On 4a, the Gemarah relates that, despite Hashem's unqualified promise of protection to Yaakov Avinu, Yaakov Avinu nonetheless feared for his life, "shema yigrom hacheit" - lest a sin result in the revocation of the promise. The Rambam thus questions: if HaKadosh Baruch Hu will never rescind a favorable promise, why did Yaakov Avinu fear for his life?

The Rambam resolves this apparent contradiction by distinguishing between two types of divine promises. While HaKadosh Baruch Hu will never rescind a promise which He conveys to an individual through an intermediary prophet, promises which Hashem makes directly with an individual are indeed subject to reversal. Hence, because Yaakov Avinu received the promise directly from HaKadosh Baruch Hu, he justifiably feared the possibility that his misdeeds might result in revocation of the promise.

The Meshech Chochmah (Bereishis 18:13) utilizes the Rambam's distinction to explain HaKadosh Baruch Hu's apparent disapproval of Sarah Imeinu's laughter in last week's parsha. Although Avraham Avinu similarly laughed upon hearing the promise of Yitzchak's birth, Avraham Avinu received the promise directly from Hashem. Because any promise heard directly from HaKadosh Baruch Hu is subject to reversal, Avraham Avinu's apparent doubt of the promise's fulfillment was justifiable. Sarah Imeinu, however, heard Hashem's promise from Avraham Avinu, who held the status of a prophet. Because any positive promise conveyed through a prophet will never be rescinded, HaKadosh Baruch Hu reprimanded Sarah Imeinu for her doubt.

While the Rambam's distinction accounts for HaKadosh Baruch Hu's response to Sarah's laughter, the Chessed L'Avraham (Shemoneh Perakim ch. 7) notes that the Rambam's aforementioned distinction appears to contradict the Rambam's own comments in Shemoneh Perakim. In Shemoneh Perakim (ch. 7), the Rambam delineates the requisite qualities for receiving prophecy. The Rambam emphasizes that a prophet need not exhibit complete perfection of character, as Tanach relates the shortcomings of numerous prophets, including Shlomo HaMelech's many wives, Shmuel HaNavi's trepidation towards Shaul, and Yaakov Avinu's fear of meeting Esav. The Chessed L'Avraham questions the Rambam's inclusion of Yaakov Avinu's fear as a "shortcoming." If the Rambam maintains that the promise of HaKadosh Baruch Hu to Yaakov Avinu was subject to reversal (since it did not employ a prophetic intermediary), Yaakov Avinu's fear of Esav was certainly justified: "shema yigrom hacheit". If so, why would this realistic fear be considered a "shortcoming?"

R' Elchanan Wasserman (sefer Kovetz He'oros s'eef 5) explains the Rambam in light of the Vilna Gaon's understanding of the possuk: "byir'as Hashem mivatach oz u'l'vanav yihye machse - In the fear of Hashem is a powerful stronghold, and for his children it will be a shelter" (Mishlei 14:26). The Gaon explains that this possuk alludes to two different forms

of belief in HaKadosh Baruch Hu. “Bitochon - trust” - refers to a person’s faith that HaKadosh Baruch Hu will fulfill that which He promises. “Chisoyon - Taking refuge” - refers to a person’s placing his trust in Hashem to provide even that which He has not promised. The Gaon adds that the notion of “chisoyon” accounts for the numerous comparisons between HaKadosh Baruch Hu and a rock (“tzur”) throughout Tanach. Just as man knows that a rock will unconditionally provide shelter from rain and harmful elements, despite the fact that the rock never “promised” him to do so, man can place his complete trust in HaKadosh Baruch Hu to provide all of his needs, even those which have never been promised.

R’ Elchanan employs the Gaon’s explanation to resolve the apparent contradiction in the Rambam. From a pragmatic perspective, Yaakov Avinu’s questioning was certainly understandable, as a promise made without a prophetic intermediary is subject to the limitation of “shema yigrom hacheit”. Rather, the Rambam’s apparent critique of Yaakov Avinu’s actions relates to the trait of “chisoyon” which mandates unwavering trust in HaKadosh Baruch Hu’s assistance, independent of any accompanying promises or guarantees. Even if a subsequent sin would entirely abrogate the original promise, Yaakov Avinu should have maintained “chisoyon” in HaKadosh Baruch Hu’s continued protection in the absence of any promises. Therefore, explains R’ Elchanan, the Rambam lists Yaakov Avinu’s fear as a “shortcoming.”

R’ Elchanan’s analysis underscores the paramount importance of maintaining not only “bitochon”, but also “chisoyon” in the assistance of Hashem in all of our endeavors. May our unwavering “bitochon” and “chisoyon” in the salvation of HaKadosh Baruch Hu merit a speedy redemption in our time.

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h a a r e t z

Owning up to facts

By Benjamin Lau

Abraham orders his servant Eliezer to find a wife for his son, Isaac, and provides strict rules: “And I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred [moladeti - also ‘homeland’], and take a wife unto my son Isaac” (Genesis 24:3-4).

Since he considers Canaan’s women to be evil, Abraham instructs Eliezer to travel to his country and homeland. Understanding that the women of Abraham’s homeland are acceptable in his master’s eyes, Eliezer asks: “Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?” (Gen. 24:5) The idea of Isaac living in the homeland of Abraham is anathema to the latter, who solemnly orders his servant, “Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again,” because he remembers God’s promise, “Unto thy seed will I give this land” (Gen. 24: 6-7).

Eliezer sets off for Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor, Abraham’s brother. After meeting Rebecca, who draws water for both Eliezer and his camels, he ostensibly quotes his master when speaking with her family: “And my master made me swear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife to my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell: But thou shalt go unto my father’s house, and to my kindred [or family], and take a wife unto my son” (Gen. 24:37-38).

Eliezer deviates from Abraham’s precise instructions. Whereas Abraham ordered him to travel to his country and homeland, Eliezer refers instead to “my father’s house, and ... my kindred [or family].” Discussing this deviation, Nahmanides offers two explanations: “Abraham did not want a wife from his native land; he wanted one from his own family ... or perhaps the servant used this phrase to display respect for Rebecca’s family and to thereby ensure that they would listen to him.”

However, when Abraham speaks of his country and homeland, he is using “country” to refer to his geographic surroundings, and “homeland” to refer to his cultural milieu. His message to Eliezer is complex. On one hand, he belongs to Mesopotamia. On the other, he wants Isaac’s chosen to leave

her - and Abraham’s - homeland, and come to Canaan, which God has promised him and his descendants. Although feeling like an alien in Canaan, he knows his future and that of his descendants is tied to that land, in accordance with God’s blessing. Isaac’s wife must live in Canaan, although she must also come from Abraham’s homeland, his cultural milieu, Mesopotamia, where he spent the formative years of his life, married Sarah, built his first home and spent many years before leaving with his father Terah.

But even in Canaan Abraham spends years wandering; he can never really feel at home in the Promised Land, nor can he call it his homeland. Only for his grandson, Jacob, does Canaan become a homeland. Indeed, when God speaks to him in Mesopotamia, Canaan is referred to as Jacob’s homeland: “And the Lord said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee” (Gen. 31:3). When Jacob speaks with his wives, Rachel and Leah, telling them of the imminent return to Canaan, he refers to it as a homeland, citing God’s words, “I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred [or thy homeland]” (Gen. 31:13).

After years of slavery in Egypt, the Israelites seek to renew their roots in the Promised Land. However, while they are preparing to return to the ancestral homeland, Moses warns them not to feel as if they own Canaan, for prosperity could lead an individual to forget God and to think: “My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth” (Deuteronomy 8:17).

The Torah knows the dangers involved in becoming rooted in the Promised Land. As an alien in an alien land in the Diaspora, you naturally adopt the humility befitting the member of the Chosen People. However, on returning to the Promised Land, you must be careful to preserve that sense of humility. That is why the Torah tells us dozens of times to be sensitive to the needs of the ger, the alien, who is unaware of the mentality in our land, and runs the risk of becoming a victim of its “owners.”

There is always the danger that future generations will forget this instruction and the hardships their ancestors endured when coming here. As part of a normal sociological process, the first generation remembers the “old country,” but is determined to build a new life in a new land, the second generation continues that building process, and the third generation’s dreams focus more specifically on the nascent homeland. When poet Leah Goldberg talks about “My homeland, a poor and fair land,” she is referring not to Palestine, which became her new home in 1935, but rather to Lithuania, where “there are seven days of spring-time a year / All the rest are rain and chill.”

My parents came to pre-1948 Israel on their own. They knew the Jewish people’s home was here, and they chose to make their life in this land. My children - their grandchildren - know no other country: Israel is their home, that is an obvious fact for them. That kind of attitude can lead one to feel “ownership” of the land.

Meanwhile, the Internet poses another danger. For the online generation, “homeland” is merely a political term, representing a stubborn commitment to a specific geographic place, while the global-village concept is becoming increasingly attractive. Israelis are now “citizens of the world,” speaking an international language: Our culture belongs to Silicon Valley; our dreams are no longer linked to the Jewish homeland. To maintain this country as our homeland, Israeli society must navigate between these two dangers - the danger of feeling as though you “own” the land, and the danger of looking to distant horizons beyond your homeland.

Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

Chayei Sarah - Burial in the Double Cave

According to tradition, Sarah was not the first person to be buried in the Machpelah cave in Hebron. Already buried there were Adam and Eve. Subsequently three more couples joined them: Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Leah.

Why was this burial cave called Machpelah? Machpelah means 'doubled'. The Sages in Eiruvin 53a explained that it is a double cave, containing two rooms or two floors. The Talmud tells of one scholar who risked entering the cave. He found the Avot (the Patriarchs and Matriarchs) in one room, and Adam and Eve in the second.

What is the significance of the Machpelah cave having two rooms? In general, what is the function of burial?

Two Paths

There are two paths of spiritual growth and enlightenment, each with its own advantages. The first path utilizes our natural faculties of reasoning and analysis. When functioning properly, our powers of intellect can achieve wonderful results. They enable us to acquire precious character traits, and serve God through an inner awareness.

However, the mind is bound and influenced by the body. When the body is swept away by cravings for physical pleasures, the mind also loses its direction. These physical desires can distort our perceptions and warp our reasoning, and we are left without guidance to enlightened living.

Therefore, God created a second means for spiritual progress: the Torah. The Torah is independent of the physical body, unaffected by its proclivities and desires. It is an immutable guide to the path of integrity and holiness. Certainly the powers of the human mind can never provide for the same level of sanctity as that attained through the God-given instructions of the Torah and its mitzvot.

Yet, the path of the human intellect retains a special advantage. The observance of mitzvot, while very lofty, has no direct influence on the body itself. The body is still attracted to physical desires, and remains at odds with the Torah's spiritual goals.

Optimally, the two methods should be combined. If our performance of mitzvot can awaken our hearts and inspire our minds, a harmony is established between our physical actions and our inner awareness. Since our mental faculties are part of our basic nature, when the mind connects with the Torah, the physical side also becomes integrated with the precepts of the Torah. This refinement of the body could not have occurred without combining together the Torah with our natural powers of intellect and reason.

Death and Burial

After the sin of Adam, death was decreed upon humanity. This was not an arbitrary punishment. The purpose of death is to separate body and soul, enabling both to be repaired and refined. The soul, unburdened with the body's physical desires, is mended and refined in the World of Souls.

The body also requires spiritual correction. It too was formed in God's image, and has tremendous spiritual power when it complements the holiness of the soul. While the soul is corrected in the World of Souls, the body is repaired through burial, as it returns to its original elements.

Refining the Body

What does this have to do with the Machpelah cave? Burial in the double cave is a metaphor for the two methods by which the body is refined and elevated.

The first method, utilizing human intelligence and reason, is exemplified by Adam and Eve. The first man and woman were created with the highest level of pristine talents and powers. With their robust mental faculties, they embodied the use of native intellect and reasoning for spiritual advance.

The Patriarchs and Matriarchs, on the other hand, were the origin of the Jewish people, paving the way for the Torah's revelation at Sinai. They represent the second spiritual guide, that of the Torah.

The double burial cave of Machpelah combined together these two paths. One room contained Adam and Eve, the pinnacle of natural intellectual capability. The second room hosted the Avot, the progenitors of the Torah. The name of the city, Hebron, comes from the word *hibur* ('connection'), hinting at the combination of both paths of elevating the body.

[Gold from the Land of Israel pp. 53-55. Adapted from Midbar Shur pp. 259-262]

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Rabbi Asher Meir

As Rivka departs to join her betrothed, Yitzchak, her family sends her off with the blessing, "Our sister, may you be mother to thousands of myriads". (Bereshit 24:60.) This blessing echoes the blessing to Avraham that his offspring should be as numerous as the dust of the earth (13:16), or as the stars of the sky (15:5). What is the exact importance of having many offspring? And how is having children spiritually connected to the ideal of having a harmonious marital life, as we read "And Yitzchak brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he took Rivka as his wife and loved her, and he was comforted after his mother"? (24:67.)

Getting married and having children are supreme values in Judaism. Each one is immensely important in itself, and each is intimately connected to the other. Both foundations were laid in the dawn of creation, when HaShem decided that "it is not good for man to be alone" (Bereshit 2:18), and commanded Adam and Chava, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it". (1:28.)

THE MITZVA TO HAVE CHILDREN

The Torah tells us that man is created in the image of G-d. We may ask, if each human being expresses G-d's image, why is there a need for an entire race of men? The answer is that each person can only reflect and express a tiny portion of HaShem's glory - even of that part of HaShem's glory which we are capable of apprehending. Each living person augments our apprehension of HaShem's greatness; each one is like a tiny window through which we can obtain a glimpse of G-dliness.

Viewed this way, the mandate to have children parallels the prohibition on killing. The generation of Noach was commanded, "He who spills the blood of man, by man will his blood be spilled; for in G-d's image He created man." (Bereshit 9:6.) The identical concern for multiplying G-d's image urges us to have many children, and indeed the very next verse tells us, "And you, be fruitful and multiply, swarm on the earth and multiply there". (Yevamot 63b.)

The final redemption, which is the ultimate revelation of HaShem's greatness, is thus advanced by each additional holy soul which appears in this world, and so our Sages tell us, "The son of David will not come until all the souls are completed in a body" (Yevamot 63b.)

QUANTITY AND QUALITY

Of course, the number of souls in the world is not the only determinant of G-d's revelation. Just as important is the responsibility each of us has to cultivate the soul, to develop it so that it radiates holiness to the greatest possible extent. Chasidic tradition explains that tzaddikim attain "general souls", spirits of immense scope which comprehend the holiness of the "private" souls of scores or even myriads of men. (Maamrei Admor HaEmtzai 66.)

MARRIAGE

Our tradition is adamant that man achieves perfection and completion only through marriage. The Torah tells us, "Male and female He created them, and He called their name "man"". (Bereshit 5:2.) From this we learn that the appellation "man" applies fully only when the male and the female are together. (Yevamot 63a.)

The incompleteness of the single state is not due to its solitude but rather to the inherent differences between man and woman. Male and female are not merely two complementary sectors of the human population, like short and tall people, but rather two complementary aspects of humanity, even of creation.

A man or woman is incomplete without a spouse because the masculine or feminine nature alone expresses only a particular aspect of G-d's plan, and only in their unification is the Divine image complete. "And G-d created man in His image, in the image of G-d He created him; male and female created He them". (Bereshit 1:27.)

This insight ties together the two aspects of marriage: it explains the importance of marriage even for those who can not have children, and at the same time it clarifies the essential connection between marriage and children.

We mentioned above that every individual has an obligation to realize and cultivate his or her own Divine image to the greatest extent possible. We now see that marriage is essential to fulfilling this obligation, since a single person expresses only an incomplete aspect of this image.

At the same time, we learned that the greatest possible revelation of G-d's image is achieved by having a great number of people who reflect it. It is only natural that G-d's image can be reproduced only where it is fully expressed - when a man and a woman are joined together in one truly complete human being. So a fulfilling marriage is the proper framework for having children, for bringing new holy souls into the world.

Rabbi Meir is in the process of writing a monumental companion to Kitzur Shulchan Aruch which beautifully presents the meanings in our mitzvot and halacha. He is also directing the Jewish Business Response Forum at the Center for Business Ethics and Social Responsibility, Jerusalem College of Technology - Machon Lev. The forum aims to help business people run their firms according to Torah, by obtaining prompt, relevant responses to their questions.

Rabbi Asher Meir is the author of the book Meaning in Mitzvot, distributed by Feldheim. The book provides insights into the inner meaning of our daily practices, following the order of the 221 chapters of the Kitzur Shulchan Arukh.

THE WEEKLY DAF Kiddushin 49 - 55

For the week ending 22 November 2008 / 24 Heshvan 5769

from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu

by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

THE FLATTERING STORK - Kiddushin 49b

“Ten measures of wisdom came down from Heaven to this world - nine of them were received by Eretz Yisrael and the rest by the entire world. Ten measures of beauty came down to this world - nine of them were received by Jerusalem and the rest by the entire world.”

Thus begins a long list of how certain characteristics were endowed to the various nations. One of these is the designation that ten measures of haughtiness and flattery came down to this world, and that nine of them were received by Babylon and later by Eilam.

The Tanachic source for the endowment of these two negative characteristics to Babylon is the enigmatic prophecy of Zecharia (5:9-11): “Then I raised my eyes and, behold, I saw two women go out and the wind was in their wings, and they had the wings of a stork...to build with it a house in the land of Shinar (Babylon).” Rabbi Yochanan explained that this refers to the haughtiness and flattery which descended to Babylon.

Where does the aforementioned prophecy hint at these two characteristics? The “wind in their wings,” says Rashi, is a reference to haughtiness, for the Hebrew word “ruach” is used to describe both winds and spirits, in this case the lofty spirit of haughtiness. But where is there any reference to flattery? Rashi's suggestion is that the key is the word “stork.” The Hebrew word for stork is “chasidah” which sounds like the Hebrew word for kindness - “chesed.” The gemara (Mesechta Chullin 63a) explains that this non-kosher bird is so called because it acts with kindness towards its friends by sharing its food with them.

Rashi's explanation leaves us puzzled. Why should the behavior of a kindness-dispensing stork be a symbol of flattery? The same question, however, has already been asked as to why the Torah prohibited eating the stork. In his commentary on Chumash (Vayikra 11:13), Ramban writes that the Torah prohibited the birds which have a cruel nature. How does this apply to the stork, which acts with kindness towards its friends?

Rabbi Yitzchak Meir (RYM), the first head of the Chassidic dynasty of Gur, explained that kindness cannot be restricted to friends, and food must be shared with all who are hungry. Selective kindness can thus be viewed as self-serving rather than as altruistic, characteristic of the insensitiveness of non-kosher birds. This may be Rashi's meaning as well: When kindness is restricted to friends it is probably the product of a self-serving interest in reciprocity, which is at the core of flattery which one showers upon an undeserving person in order to gain his favor.

WHAT A JEW REALLY WANTS - Kiddushin 50a

Even though a divorce is valid only if the man gives the get document of his own free will, there are certain situations in which the rabbinical court

compels a reluctant husband to divorce his wife. The court is empowered in such circumstances to coerce the man until he declares that he wishes to go through with the divorce.

How can we rely on the consent produced by pressure, asks the gemara, when we assume from his initial reluctance that in his heart he is opposed to the divorce?

The gemara attempts to use this as proof that what is in one's heart cannot contradict what he verbalizes; but this proof is rejected because this situation may be different in that we have the right to assume that his verbalized consent is sincere, for he wishes to fulfill the mitzvah of obeying the Sages.

Rambam (Laws of Divorce 2:20) elaborates on the reason for considering valid a divorce given under pressure, and he explains as follows why this is different from someone pressured into doing something that the Torah does not require him to do, such as selling or giving away some possession:

“When someone's evil inclination has taken hold of him to avoid fulfilling a mitzvah, or to commit a sin, and he is beaten until he does what he is obligated to do or refrains from what he is forbidden to do, he is not considered as acting against his will. It is he, rather, who has coerced himself with an evil attitude to act against his true will. We therefore view the man whom we force to divorce his wife as one who truly wishes to be a part of Jewry and truly desires to fulfill the mitzvot and to refrain from sins, but who is the helpless victim of his evil inclination. Once he has been pressured to the point where his evil inclination is subdued and he declares his consent, we consider it as his having divorced of his own free will.”

TALMUDIGEST - Kiddushin 49 - 55

For the week ending 22 November 2008 / 24 Heshvan 5769

from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu

by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

THE SHOWBREAD GLUTTON- Kidushin 53a

During the forty years that Shimon Hatzadik served as kohen gadol there was a blessing in the lechem hapanim showbreads which the kohanim divided up to eat after they were removed from a week's stay on the Sanctuary table. Each kohen managed to receive a kazayit measure of the holy bread, which more than satisfied him.

After his passing there was a shrinking of the breads, which meant that each kohen would receive only a tiny portion. The dignified kohanim therefore withdrew from the division while the gluttons grabbed the portions of others.

One kohen who thus grabbed another's portion was derisively called a thief for the rest of his life.

Rashi points out that this gemara is not in conflict with the gemara (Succah 56a) which states that the kohanim entering the Sanctuary for their week's duty divided the breads due to them in the northern part of the Sanctuary. The gemara refers to the era of Shimon Hatzadik, when the division amongst all the kohanim left each of them with a proper amount and there was no cause for any grabbing.

WHAT THE SAGES SAY

“There is a consensus that a woman whose suitor turned out to be of a higher family status than how he presented himself can invalidate the kiddushin because she can say that she does not desire a shoe too big for her foot.”

The Sage Ulla - Kiddushin 49a

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