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ON **CHAYEI SARAH** - 5773

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from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** ryfrand@torah.org
to: ravfrand@torah.org
date: Thu, Nov 8, 2012 at 10:45 AM
subject: **Rabbi Frand on Parshas Chayei Sarah**
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 #788, Be Careful What You Ask For. Good Shabbos!

A New Insight Into: Her Beauty at 20 Was Like That Of A 7 Year Old

The parsha begins with the words "Sarah's lifetime was one hundred years and twenty years and seven years; the years of Sarah's life." [Bereshis 23:1] The famous Rashi at the beginning of the parsha explains why the noun "years" (shannah) is repeated after each unit of her age: "To say to you that each one is expounded on its own: to teach that when she was a hundred years old she was like twenty with respect to sin, just as one who is twenty is considered as if she has not sinned, for she is not liable to punishment, so too when Sarah was a hundred years old, she was without sin. And when she was twenty years old she was like seven years old with regard to beauty.

If we were to take a poll as to who is more beautiful, a 20 year old woman or a 7 year old girl – I believe it would be the overwhelming conclusion that a 20 year old has greater beauty than a 7 year old. Beyond that, it seems strange that the Torah needs to put such emphasis on the fact that Sarah was a beautiful woman. We are all familiar with Mishlei 31:30, which we recite every Friday night -- "Grace is false and beauty vain, a woman who fears Hashem, she should be praised."

Of course, we understand that as an individual who attempted to bring many women "under the Wings of the Divine Presence," it was important that the matriarch Sarah should be an attractive person, which she was. But that the Torah should place such emphasis on her physical beauty seems strange. If I were to be called upon to eulogize a great woman from this community and I said "This woman was pious and righteous and humble and she was gorgeous!" - rest assured that would be the last eulogy I would ever be called upon to give in Baltimore, Maryland. There is a Zohar in this week's parsha which reads "Happy is the person who makes himself humble in this world. Such a person will be happy in the world to come. This is how Rebbi used to start his lecture in the Yeshiva: 'The one who is small in his own eyes is really big; on the other hand, one who is big in his own eyes is really small.'" The Zohar cites as its proof text for this principle the aforementioned pasuk at the beginning of our parsha. When the pasuk mentions the number 100, which is large, it uses the term year (shannah) in the singular. When it mentions the number 7, which is small, it uses the term years (shanim), in the plural. The Yeshuos Malko explains that this is exactly the trait of Sarah. When Chazal say that Sarah had the beauty of a 7 year old when she was 20 years old, the Medrash knew that 20 year old women are more beautiful than 7 year old girls, but they were talking about Sarah's attitude toward her beauty. Normally, when a 20 year old is beautiful, she knows it, she is proud of it, and she may even flaunt it. But Sarah was so modest that when she was 20 years old, her perception of her beauty was such that it was reminiscent of a 7 year old. Because of her child-like innocence, a seven year old is totally unaware of how cute and even beautiful she is. Chazal are not praising beauty for beauty's sake. They are praising the fact that Sarah did not let her beauty go to her head. When she was 20 and truly gorgeous, her beauty was like that of a seven year old – meaning she was totally oblivious to it, as a result of her modesty. Sarah was the embodiment of the idea expressed in the Zohar that no matter how big one is, the smaller they see themselves to be, the more admirable they are.

The Gemara many times says "this is what people mean when they say..." (haynu d'amree inshee) as an indication that expressions people use in the vernacular have truth to them. Haynu d'amree inshee: Humility makes a man feel smaller as he becomes greater.

We all have our favorite "Gedolim stories", stories of the great humility displayed by the great sages of Israel. I have always been struck by the fact that our master Rav Moshe Feinstein, z"l, besides all his other outstanding qualities, was such a humble man. He was once walking on the Lower East Side and was getting into a car. A fellow walking on the street noticed a friend of his down the block and yelled out "Hey, Moshe!" Rav Moshe Feinstein turned around and asked "What is it you want?" How many people on the Lower East Side used to call Rav Moshe Feinstein "Hey, Moshe"? How could he think that this person meant him? The answer is because he was extremely modest. He was a person who was unbelievably big and took that greatness and nevertheless perceived himself to be a small person.

This is the greatness of our Gedolim. This is the lesson of the Matriarch Sarah. She was as beautiful as 20, but she saw her beauty as innocently as would a 7 year old.

This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Chayei Sarah are provided below: 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 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD RavFrand, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org. Join the Jewish Learning Revolution! Torah.org: The Judaism Site brings this and a host of other classes to you every week. Visit <http://torah.org> or email learn@torah.org to get your own free copy of this mailing. Need to change or stop your subscription? Please visit our subscription center, <http://torah.org/subscribe/> -- see the links on that page. Permission is granted to redistribute, but please give proper attribution and copyright to the author and Torah.org. Both the author and Torah.org reserve certain rights. Email copyrights@torah.org for full information. Torah.org: The Judaism Site Project Genesis, Inc. 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 250 Baltimore, MD 21208 <http://www.torah.org/> learn@torah.org (410) 602-1350 FAX: (410) 510-1053

From: "Shabbat Shalom" shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org Date: Nov 8, 2012 8:14 PM Subject: G-d wins election, Carbophobia, Hurricane's Life Lessons - Parshat Chayei Sara - Shabbat Shalom from the OU Parshat Chayei Sara- Establishing Balance: Avraham's Life Draws to a Close

Excerpted from Rabbi Shmuel Goldin's 'Unlocking The Torah Text: An In-Depth Journey Into The Weekly Parsha- Bereisit

This study is presented as an overview. Some of the sections that we have already examined will now be briefly reviewed as part of a cohesive textual flow. For greater detail on these sections please reference Vayeira 4, Chayei Sara 1 and Chayei Sara 2.

Context A series of five seemingly unconnected events towards the end of Avraham's life actually establish a pattern designed to teach the patriarch the parameters and boundaries of his involvement with an outside world:

1. Avraham prays on behalf of the Philistine king, Avimelech. The king had been punished with illness after abducting Sara (see Lech Lecha 2 for a discussion of a similar event).
2. Yitzchak is born.
3. Avraham and Avimelech contract a covenant.
4. The Akeida takes place.
5. Avraham defines himself as a ger v'toshav in his negotiations with the Hittites for the Cave of Machpeila. The patriarch then sends Eliezer to Aram Naharaim to find a wife for Yitzchak.

Approaches

A careful look at events 1–4 reveals an alternating pattern between connecting "external" and "internal" events in the patriarch's life. One step forward, one step back, these events create a tension that helps Avraham arrive at a critical moment of self-definition.

A

Event 1 – External: Avraham prays on behalf of Avimelech after Sara is released from the king's palace.

B

Event 2 – Internal: Yitzchak is born.

Avraham's prayers on behalf of Avimelech, according to the rabbis, affect not only the foreign king's destiny but the patriarch's own. The Talmud perceives a fundamental link between Avraham's supplications and the subsequent birth of Yitzchak: "The Torah records the birth of Yitzchak immediately after Avraham's prayers on behalf of Avimelech to teach us that if one asks for mercy for his friend and is himself in similar need, he is answered first."

Avraham thus learns that his prayers on behalf of another allow his own dreams to be fulfilled. The intertwining of the patriarch's personal fate with his global mission to the world is underscored.

Avraham and his family cannot live in a vacuum. Their personal success depends on their active involvement in the lives of those around them.

C

Event 3 – External: At Avimelech's request, Avraham and the king of the Philistines contract a covenant.

This covenant is viewed within rabbinic thought as a dangerous error on Avraham's part (see Vayeira 4, Approaches C).

Emboldened, perhaps, by the positive results of his previous encounter with Avimelech, Avraham oversteps his bounds in his desire to interface with the outside world. He fails to recognize the dangers of unfettered involvement with those around him.

D

Event 4 – Internal: The Akeida takes place. We have already noted the approach of the Rashbam who views the Akeida as God's direct response to Avraham's covenant with Avimelech (see Vayeira 4, Approaches C).

In effect, God delivers a wakeup call to the patriarch concerning the preciousness of Avraham's own family and the balance that must be struck in his dealings with an outside world. He must pull back.

Involvement is certainly essential, but it must have its boundaries.

E

Event 5 – The Result: Ger v'toshav.

Armed with the knowledge conveyed by the events outlined above, Avraham is able to define himself as a ger v'toshav, "a stranger and a citizen" in his negotiations with the Hittites. This self-definition not only succinctly outlines Avraham's place within society but the place that his descendants will occupy in the world community across the ages (see Chayei Sara 1, Approaches E). Bitter experience has taught the patriarch the delicate balance that must be struck in his dealings with an outside world.

Proper study of the Torah text requires that we back up enough to view the flow of events. Nothing is ever random in the Torah and seemingly unrelated episodes often combine to create significant patterns.

In this case, God teaches Avraham through a series of seesawing episodes that his involvement with the outside world will have to be marked by the tension captured in the patriarch's own words: ger v'toshav, "a stranger and a citizen."

Shema Koleinu

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I AM A STRANGER AND RESIDENT AMONG YOU

RABBI MORDECHAI BROWNSTEIN

"One is either a 'stranger', an alien, or one is a 'resident', a citizen.

How could Avraham claim both identities for himself?

Avraham's definition of his dual status, we believe, describes with profound accuracy the historical position of the Jew who resides in a predominantly non-Jewish society. He was a resident, like other inhabitants of Canaan, sharing with them a concern for the welfare of society, digging wells, and contributing to the progress of the country in loyalty to its government and institutions.

Here, Avraham was clearly a fellow citizen, a patriot among compatriots, joining others in advancing the common welfare. However, there was another aspect, the spiritual, in which Avraham regarded himself as a stranger. His identification and solidarity with his fellow citizens in the secular realm did not imply his readiness to relinquish any aspects of his religious uniqueness. His was a different faith and he was governed by perceptions, truths, and observances which set him apart from the larger faith community.

In this regard, Avraham and his descendants would always remain "strangers". (Reflections of the Rav)

The Rav attempts with this commentary to mitigate a difficulty in the text that is the focus of Rashi and Ibn Ezra: Namely, how can one be described as both alien stranger and resident citizen?

Rashi, followed by Sforno and Rashbam, explain that Avraham was a stranger that wanted to settle here, to be a citizen, and therefore, claimed the rights to the land. Ibn Ezra views the two terms as one phrase ger toshav, 'a stranger who resides among you'. It would appear the Rav's commentary follows the Ibn Ezra's interpretation.

Avraham is the ivri, the one who takes the other side in the great debate – the non-conformist with the culture around him; and though he is concerned about the wealth and woe of the state he lives in and, indeed participates in its achievements, he retains his unique identity and does not trade the sacred for the temporal.

The Rav sees in Avraham the prototype Jew. The Jew in Germany, America, Great Britain, Canada etc.

It would be of interest to compare and contrast this interpretation with one of the Torat Chacham.

"I am not certain how I am viewed in your midst, ger or toshav. With this [request] it can be determined: If you will give me a burial site in your midst, it is an indication that I am [accepted] as a citizen like all

other citizens. If, however, [the burial site is not] in your midst, even if it is a gift, that would be an indication [that to you] I am still a stranger.” (R’ Chaim ben R’ Avraham. Student of R’ Chaim Vital.)

Avraham is not certain of how, to what degree, the society around him perceives and accepts him. According to this interpretation, Avraham is steadfast in his own commitments but does not yet know how he is viewed by the locals; is he alien or compatriot, different or integrated. Again, the inference is made to the prototype Jew, the wanderer, without a state of his own, who can settle into and find some degree of satisfaction, even thrive in a society that stands on the other side of the great debate.

What is that great debate which divides Avraham from the rest, the roaring river which forms the partition that defines Avraham’s legacy? “And He knew that there is one G-d, And He directs the [celestial] spheres [directs nature], And He created everything, And there isn’t in all existence another god, And He knew everyone else is mistaken.” (Rambam hil’ Avodah Zarah Ch. 1)

The great debate rages in Avraham’s mind and heart.

There, inside, in his inner world he knows the truth. Everyone else is mistaken!

Visibly, Avraham is a citizen; in his mind and heart though, Avraham is a stranger for “everyone else is mistaken”.

How long will Avraham, the lonely man of faith on the other side of the great debate, remain a stranger, alien to the surrounding culture?

“And the settlement of the children of Israel that settled in Egypt 430 years. And it came to pass, at the end of 430 years, and it was on that very day, all the hosts of G-d left the land of Egypt.” (Shmos 12: 40 – 41)

“This pasuk is difficult to understand! We do not find [in Scripture] Israel in Egypt 430 years!

Our Rabbis, ob”m, explain this tally [begins] from from Avraham’s departure from his country and birthplace (Mechilta parshas Bo ch. 14) immediately reducing him to the status of a stranger in the land of Canaan, as it states, “I am a stranger and resident among you”. (Maharal, Gevuros Hashem ch. 38)

The term ‘stranger’, ger, carries a message not limited to the wanderer on the other side of the great debate, living among the mistaken else of the side opposite to his, defining his lonely self as a citizen politically, a loyal patriot of his country but as a stranger never-the-less because of faith and tradition. The term ‘stranger’ also speaks of the length of his exile, the duration of his dual attitude until that time when all will inhabit the same side of that great debate and the debate will cease to divide Avraham from the mistaken other.

Thanks to hamelaket@gmail.com for collecting the following items:

From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein
<info@jewishdestiny.com>
Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

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

Was Eliezer correct in establishing a pre-ordained sign of behavior to determine which woman would be the proper mate for Yitzchak? This is a long running debate among the commentators and scholars until our very day. Maimonides criticizes him for so doing while Rabbi Avraham ben David (Raavad) severely criticizes Maimonides for criticizing Eliezer.

The Talmud in the Tosefta to the eighth chapter of tractate Shabat discusses all sorts of superstitions, signs, indications of good fortune or

danger, etc. that are forbidden to Jews to indulge in. The clear indication of the Tosefta is that anything that has been empirically proven to be of practical value is permitted, whereas good luck charms and other empirically unproven signs and omens are forbidden, as being akin to pagan belief and practices.

Due to many historical and social pressures over the centuries, many such omens and signs have seeped into Jewish society eventually acquiring the status of accepted custom. And we are all very aware of the power and hold that customs have upon individuals.

I am always reminded of the rueful comment of Rabbi Yaakov Emden who famously said that “it is regrettable that ‘not to steal’ was a commandment and not a custom for had it been a custom more people would attempt to observe it.” Part of the problem in today’s society is the prioritization of omens and signs and questionable customs over the values and observances of Judaism itself as proscribed by the Torah and rabbinic writings. The spooks apparently always win out.

Of interest, at least to me, is the fact that Eliezer disappears completely from the narrative of the Torah after the mission of bringing Rivkah to Yitzchak is accomplished. If one adopts the opinion of Maimonides regarding Eliezer’s use of signs and omens as being incorrect and unjustified, perhaps that would inform his later disappearance from the Torah’s text. However, those who laud his behavior and view him as a greatly righteous person, must confront the issue of his absence in the narrative of the Torah after fulfilling the mission that Avraham placed upon him.

A parable is related in the name of Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan (Chafetz Chaim): A person who never saw a railroad train before stands at a crossing and sees the train whiz by his eyes. He notices that all of the cars of the train are moving at the speed as is the locomotive. He does not therefore realize that the cars have no power of their own independent of the locomotive. When the locomotive can pull no longer then all of the cars will come to a halt.

Our father Avraham was the locomotive that pulled Eliezer and many others along in their search for God. When he passes from the world, as recorded in this week’s parsha, then Eliezer remains frozen and unable to grow spiritually. Thus the Torah has really nothing more to say to us about him. Jews are supposed to be locomotives, not just train cars being pulled along.

Shabat shalom.

From Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>

To weekly@ohr.edu

Subject Torah Weekly

Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Chayei Sara
For the week ending 10 November 2012 / 24 Heshvan 5773
by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com
Insights
SuperHero

“And I will have you swear...” (24:3)

In a more modest world, mild-mannered ClarkKent would discreetly slip into a phone booth, tear of his shirt and reveal his true identity as Superman.

If truth be known, we can all be Superman.

Within us exist tremendous untapped powers. There are well-documented cases of mothers lifting cars 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 week's Torah portion, Avraham makes his servant Eliezer swear not to take a wife for Yitzchak from the Canaanites: "Rather, to my land and to my kindred shall you go and take a wife for my son..."

If Avraham doubted Eliezer's loyalty, why send him in the first place? And if Eliezer's 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

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From Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com>

To Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com>

Subject Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Parshas CHAYEI SARAH

Sarah's life was one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years. (23:1)

The Torah informs us that Sarah Imeinu lived to be one hundred twenty seven years old. We are now aware of the Matriarch's longevity, but what about her life? Very little is recorded concerning her actual life, what happened, what she did, what type of person she was: simple questions whose answers would characterize the first Matriarch. We have some idea concerning her outreach activities. Chazal teach that Sarah converted the women, while Avraham Avinu converted the men. They derive this from the pasuk, *V'es ha'nefesh asher asu b'Charan*, "And the souls which they made in Charan" (Bereishis 12:5). Sarah taught monotheism alongside Avraham. Together, they succeeded in reaching out to the pagan population. This is taught to us by Chazal. The Torah, however, does not elaborate about Sarah. Why are we not accorded a better perspective on the life and personality of this elusive Matriarch? One hundred twenty seven years is a long time. Certainly, Sarah accomplished much during her life that would serve as a worthy inspiration to her descendants.

Apparently, Sarah Imeinu's concealment from the public eye is her greatest virtue and most "prominent" quality. When the angels who visited Avraham inquired concerning Sarah's whereabouts, *A'yei Sarah ishtecha*, "Where is Sarah, your wife?" the Patriarch had replied, *Hinei! b'Ohel*, "Behold! She is in the tent!" (Bereishis 18:9). Rashi comments, *tzenuah hee*, "Sarah is a private person." Avraham was not simply informing them of Sarah's present location, but rather, he was intimating a powerful and penetrating characterization of his wife: "She is in the tent! Sarah is a private person!" Sarah was modeling for her daughters throughout the future generations regarding the role of a *bas Yisrael*. The most fitting description of a Jewish girl/woman is: *hinei b'ohel* - "She is in the tent."

This does not mean, of course that the Jewish woman must remain sequestered in the home, locked up in the kitchen - as many secularists and modernists would have you think the Torah is suggesting. This description does not imply inferiority, since we know that Sarah was

superior to Avraham in *nevuah*, prophecy. David Hamelech writes in *Sefer Tehillim 45:14*, *Kol kevudah bas Melech penimah*, "The entire glory of the daughter of the King lies on the inside." This pasuk tells it all. A Jewish girl/woman is a *bas melech*, daughter of the King; hence, she is different than her non-Jewish female counterpart. The Jewish woman neither needs, nor is it appropriate for her, to be involved on the public stage, in the spotlight, calling attention to herself. It is not something that she craves, because she is the daughter of the King. She is above it.

Furthermore, David Hamelech is not only addressing the private nature of the female role, he is issuing a statement concerning the religious experience in general: it does not have to be filled with marching bands and advertisements, calling attention to one's religious service. The religious experience is designed to be between man and G-d. While the concept of *tznius* applies to both men and women, the private sphere should be the dominant area of a woman's life. Thus, we know very little concerning the life of Sarah Imeinu. After all, she was a *tzenuah!* Women throughout the generations have always been defined and presented as figures of great moral strength - especially during periods of crisis. After Sarah passed away, no one was able to fill her shoes until Yitzchak Avinu married Rivkah Imeinu and brought her to his mother's tent. Immediately, the daughter-in-law revived the spiritual atmosphere that had been missing since Sarah's passing. Rivkah assumed the role of Matriarch. She was the one who saw through the ruse of Eisav. She perceived his malevolent nature. Her moral courage helped Yaakov to retrieve the blessings, thereby preserving the future of Klal Yisrael. Tanach constantly reiterates this idea, and Chazal underscore it. It was the women who refused to participate in the creation of the Golden Calf, and it has been the *nashim tzidkanios*, righteous woman of every generation, who have given the Jewish People their moral strength to survive and triumph over the vicissitudes that we face individually and collectively as a nation.

In a *shmues*, ethical discourse, on the religious function of a *bas Yisrael*, *Horav Shimshon Pincus*, *zl*, focuses on a practical question: How do we determine the *gadlus*, greatness, of a woman? We hear of *gadlus ba'Torah*, distinction in Torah erudition; likewise, we are aware of *gadlus in chesed*, kindness. There are individuals who stand out in areas of philanthropy, but what defines a woman's *gadlus*? The *Chafetz Chaim* was a *gadol*; so was the *Chazon Ish*. Does this mean that their wives were also distinguished? At first, *Rav Shimshon* posits that the term *gadlus* applies to men. Since the areas of women's involvement are limited, they are all great!

After hearing, however that the *Gaon*, *zl*, *m'Vilna*, had etched on his late wife's monument: *Lo hinichah acharehah k'mosah*, "She left over none other like her," we understand that apparently there is a concept of *gadlus* of a woman.

Now that we know of this concept - how does one earn the distinction? Let us face it. Men are in the public eye. Therefore, others view and scrutinize their actions. Thus, they have the ability to inspire others. What does the average person observe concerning a woman's *avodas ha'kodesh*, service to the Almighty? Imagine entering the home of the *Gaon m'Vilna* to find the sage in his study, deeply engrossed in a most difficult *sugya*, topic, in the Talmud. One observation is enough to tell us that we are privy to greatness. The *Gaon's* encyclopedic knowledge, brilliant mind, and exceptional diligence are all evident. Now, we pass through the house in search of the *rebbeztin*. She is in the kitchen preparing the *Shabbos* meal. To paraphrase *Rav Shimshon*, "Is her *kugel* better than anyone else's?" What determined the *gadlus* of the *Gaon's* wife? Clearly, if the *Gaon* made such a statement concerning his wife, it was true. Since her virtue was not prominent, however, how should we, who did not see or hear, define her area of distinction? This question applies to all women. Since *tznius* is their salient characteristic, how are we able to determine their *gadlus*?

Rav Shimshon quotes David Hamelech's description of a tzaddik and applies it appropriately to his female counterpart. The Psalmist says "Tzaddik katamar yifrach, "A righteous man will flourish like a date palm" (Tehillim 92:13). The nature of a date palm is unlike that of other trees. It has a feature that is possibly due to its unusual height. Commensurate with the tree's height above ground are its roots below ground. In other words, if the tree is fifty feet high, its roots will spread fifty feet underground!

A similar idea may be applied to man and woman in their contrasting roles. They both ascribe to a concept of gadlus - but in different areas. The man distinguishes himself in the public arena, while the woman individualizes herself in an area hidden from the public eye. Tzaddikim are compared to the date palm, because its unusual height elevates it above all others. Thus, it may be detected from a distance. The righteous person stands out above the common man. He distinguishes himself in scholarship, piety, virtue and acts of loving-kindness. The woman does all of these, but her behavior is not brought to anyone's attention. Her distinction is privacy. This is her greatness. The Gaon m'Vilna was great. His wife was also great. His distinction was noticed by all, while her virtue was recognized only by those who had a discerning eye. When the Gaon said, "She left no one to replace her," he was reflecting his personal knowledge.

When we observe the awesome majestic height of a skyscraper, we seldom consider the depth of its foundation. Without a foundation that is very deep and extremely solid, the formidable structure would topple. Regrettably, no one takes notice of the foundation. They take it for granted. Undeniably, this reflects superficial shortsightedness, since the foundation is (at least) equally important.

Women are the foundation of Klal Yisrael. The proof: matrilineal lineage. A Jew's pedigree is determined according to his mother. She is the origin of his Yiddishkeit. She remains inconspicuous by nature. She does not need the public arena, because she is the daughter of the King.

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

Avraham Avinu is confronted with one of the greatest challenges of his life. Perhaps it was not a spiritual challenge as much as it was emotional in nature. His wife- his partner in life- the mother of Yitzchak Avinu, had just died. The Patriarch had to deal with the funeral arrangements. It was not easy. He wanted a specific burial site, one which had already been used by Adam HaRishon and Chavah. He was determined to obtain this specific site. Efron owned it, and he was asking an exorbitant sum of money for its purchase. Avraham paid. No problem. It was for his Sarah. End of story.

The Ramban relates the story of the sale and adds the following: "With the generosity of his heart," Avraham settled with Efron. How does "generous" apply to a business deal? Efron was ripping him off. Avraham was pushed against the wall. There was no dissuading Efron. The Patriarch had no other choice but to pay. Why call him "generous"? Horav A. Henach Leibowitz, zl, explains that Avraham's generosity was expressed in the manner in which he paid for the burial site. It is not what he did, but how he did it. No haggling, no kvetching. Efron stated a price - albeit extortionate - Avraham paid with a smile. The Patriarch needed the Meoras HaMachpeilah. Thus, it was necessary to purchase it at any price. Efron was being a petty cheat by taking advantage of the aged widower, but, unfortunately, he had the keys. He could charge whatever he wanted. Avraham paid - and he did not complain. Efron's profit had no bearing on Avraham's decision to pay.

There are those of us who, when faced with a financial proposition, back out from laying out the money. This is despite the awareness that it is necessary, important - even profitable. We instead choose to be without it, because, although the price may be within reach of our ability to pay, we have a problem with allowing the "other fellow" to make such a

profit. Avraham Avinu was not affected by this pinheadedness. He gave Efron the funds with a complete heart. This is the meaning of generosity - no holds barred, no attitude, pure and simple wholeheartedness in giving.

The Rosh Yeshivah derives from Avraham's approach what is to be the proper attitude we should maintain towards our material bounty. Money is a gift from the Almighty, but with strings attached. He wants us to use it properly to stimulate and enhance mitzvah performance. Thus, we have no right to spend foolishly, to live beyond our means. Money exists for a purpose. When the purpose emerges, we should spend the money with no qualms. The Chazon Ish once said that if we decide that it is necessary to purchase a certain object, then parting with one million dollars should be no problem. Likewise, we should be as meticulous in guarding every dollar that could later be used for a mitzvah performance. This explains why certain people whom we know are quite wealthy, at times come across as being miserly, when, in fact, they give tzedakah, charity, as if there is no tomorrow. They are just careful with their G-d-given gift. The Chafetz Chaim would say: "People say that time is money. I say money is time." Every penny a person earns represents precious time that he invested. Time/life is G-d's greatest gift. We may not squander a moment. Spending money frivolously reflects a callous attitude towards the gift of time.

The Rosh Yeshivah concludes with the notion that our financial success in life and our material wealth have no intrinsic value, other than the good deeds they enable us to execute. Having money and not spending it wisely undermines one's success. When we begin to fall in love with money, when it becomes something we hoard for its own sake, we become trapped in what will become a life of misery and dissatisfaction. It will never be enough. We will always want more and refuse to share. The obsession will drive us to the point that we will lose whatever relationships we have developed, because our money will supersede them. We will never have enough, as our desires far exceed our wealth. If we remain objectively aloof, however, detached from our money, realizing that, in fact, it is not our money, but Hashem's money, which He has lent to us to use for a specific purpose, then we remain its master - not vice versa.

Now Avraham was old, well on in his years, and Hashem had blessed him with everything. (24:1)

Avraham Avinu was the mechanech, educator, par-excellence. He taught a pagan world the truth of monotheism. He inspired as he taught, thus serving as the vehicle for promulgating belief in the Creator. As the first educator, he set the standard for excellence in education. His goal was not simply to teach his generation, but to set the parameters and lay down the rules for the most appropriate manner in which to inculcate one's beliefs in his students. When we study the educational approach of the first Patriarch, we are confronted with two questions which are pointed out by Horav Arye Leib Heyman, zl. These two questions serve as powerful lessons for the educator and parent - who is, in fact, a child's first - and often primary - educator.

Avraham had a servant who was also his primary disciple. Eliezer was entrusted with searching for and seeking out a wife for Yitzchak. This woman would be the next Matriarch, replacing Sarah Imeinu. As the wife of Yitzchak and, thus, progenitress of Klal Yisrael, she must be a special woman. Avraham detailed three criteria to which he expected Eliezer to adhere without fail. He exhorted Eliezer not to take a Canaanite girl for Yitzchak. They were a vile, immoral people, whose influence was passed down through the genes. If Yitzchak would marry a Canaanite, the bright future which was designated for him could quite possibly be precluded.

Second, Avraham demanded that Eliezer take a wife for Yitzchak from his own country and birthplace. The third request is the one upon which we will focus. Yitzchak was not permitted to leave the country. If we

peruse the pesukim, we see that Avraham clearly spelled out the first two criteria. There are no questions, no grey areas that might mislead Eliezer. The third condition, however, was ambiguous in the sense that Avraham did not come out and blatantly say, "Yitzchak may not leave home to look for a wife." Rather, Avraham intimated this idea to Eliezer to the point that Eliezer questioned him: U'lai lo soveh ha'ishah laleches acharai el ha'erezt. "Perhaps (what if) the woman does not want to leave?" (Bereishis 6:5). Why did Avraham not come straight out with his request? Was it by design that he waited for Eliezer to pose the question? Rav Heyman derives from here that a rebbe should encourage his students to think on their own. He should teach in such a manner that allows them to question what he says, and respond to his questions. Otherwise, they just sit there listening to his lecture without participating on their own. Their ability to digest the lesson and incorporate it into their own thought processes thereby becomes stunted. A rebbe should empower his students to think.

In Bereishis 15:2, Avraham's servant and disciple, Eliezer, is referred to as Damesek Eliezer. In the Talmud Yoma 28b, Chazal view Damesek as an acronym describing Eliezer's spiritual relationship with his rebbe Avraham. Damesek stands for, Doleh u'mashkeh, miToras rabo l'acheirim, "He draws out the Torah from his rebbe and gives others to drink." Rav Heyman gleans from here that Eliezer would toil to understand the profundity of Avraham's teaching, so that he could transmit it to others. How do Chazal know that Eliezer had this unique approach to study? From where do they derive that this is the meaning of Damesek?

The Rav suggests that it is specifically from the fact that Eliezer questioned Avraham concerning the girl's refusal to return with Yitzchak that we learn that Eliezer did not merely listen to the lesson and move on. Avraham encouraged questions. He empowered his students to think, to postulate, to theorize. Thus, Eliezer understood that he was to question Avraham concerning Yitzchak's leaving home in the event the girl refused to relocate.

We now address the second lesson to be extracted from Avraham Avinu's "manual" on education. These parshios address the first Patriarch's life - his relationship with people of all backgrounds, his students, his wife and extended family - but what about his most important student, his heir and successor? Nothing is mentioned of Avraham's relationship with Yitzchak Avinu. There is practically nothing - no lessons, no conversation, no dialogue, no message - nothing! In fact, the only recorded discourse between father and son is the fifteen words that passed between them at the Akeidah. What educational lesson can we learn from the "unrecorded" conversations between father and son? Rav Heyman explains that we adduce from here that, Gedolah shimushah shel Torah yoser mi'limudah, "Greater is the service of Torah than its (actual) study" (Berachos 7b). The dugma, example that a rebbe personally portrays to his students is of greater and more enduring value than the lesson he gives them. The impression which affects the student most strongly is the one that is imparted daily by observing his rebbe's venture, his reaction to success, his ability to confront challenge, to remain stoic under moments of duress and strong during periods of travail. Avraham's lesson to us is if one wants to teach his son the mitzvah of tzedakah, it is best transmitted to the son by having him observe his father/rebbe executing the mitzvah. This applies across the board to all aspects of Torah. True, we need explanations and dialectic, but the primary lesson is best taught by role models.

His sons Yitzchak and Yishmael buried him. (25:9)

Rashi quotes Chazal in the Talmud Bava Basra 16b, who derive from the above pasuk which places Yitzchak before Yishmael that Yishmael repented his ways. The errant son told Yitzchak to precede him. This display of respect is an indicator of Yishmael's spiritual well-being, resulting from his repentance. Apparently, the fact that Yishmael had

come from a distance to attend the funeral was not a strong enough indication that he had changed. It was the fact that he allowed his younger brother, the one who "replaced" him as Avraham Avinu's "son," to precede him that serves as a proof of his repentance. Does a Yishmael change his stripes due to a single act of *mentchlichkeit*, human decency and respect?

A similar question may be asked a bit later on in the Patriarchal saga. Eisav came in from the field "tired and hungry." Yaakov Avinu had just returned from Avraham Avinu's funeral. Eisav wants some of Yaakov's porridge. The future Patriarch traded the soup for the rite of the firstborn. Eisav could care less. Chazal tell us that the day in question was not one of Eisav's better days: "That rasha, wicked one (Eisav), transgressed five sins on that day: He cohabited with a betrothed woman; he killed a man; he denied the existence of G-d; he denied *Techiyas Ha'Meisim*, the Resurrection of the dead; he degraded the bechorah, rite of the firstborn." Pretty bad day for Eisav, but what does degrading the bechorah have to do with the other four sins? Once it has been established that Eisav had committed heresy, killed a man, denied the Resurrection, violated a betrothed woman, what was there to add? Is there anything worse than an agnostic?

Yishmael allowed his younger brother to precede him - obviously he had repented. Eisav denigrated the bechorah - obviously he was a rasha. Hadn't that already been confirmed by his heretical activities? It is almost as if we are "nickel and dimeing," picking up on what seems to be minor activities and infractions, while ignoring blatant sinful behavior.

There is more. Let us see how our sages defined rasha, wicked. Clearly, when we see what they feel determines wicked, we will have an idea concerning the barometer for determining righteous. The shidduch, matrimonial match, of Yitzchak to Rivkah was proposed by Eliezer, Avraham's servant. Lavan and Besuel - son and father - replied, "Vayaan Lavan u'Besuel va'yomru mei Hashem yatza hadavar, "Then Lavan and Besuel answered and said, 'The matter stemmed from Hashem'" (Bereishis 24:50). Chazal note that Lavan, the son, preceded Besuel, the father. Why? In his great insolence, Lavan rushed to speak up before his father, an indication of his wickedness.

Horav Michael Peretz, Shlita, observes from the above three Torah lessons that respect and its various derivatives play critical roles in determining a person's moral posture, with which its ripple effect on his spiritual nature are equally compelling. The root of Eisav's spiritual descent to total infamy was his denigration of the bechorah. If the bechorah had no value, then mitzvos in general had no significance to him. This disdain regressed further, to the point that he denied the Resurrection and ultimately became an apostate, denying that G-d is in control of the world. Such a person has no qualms concerning taking a human life or violating a woman betrothed to another man. Man's actions coincide with his values and beliefs. If there are no mitzvos, then there is no Afterlife and, ultimately, there is no G-d. Killing becomes a minor infraction. It all begins, however, with a disdain for the spiritual. If the behavior means nothing - so it goes with everything else.

Likewise, if Yishmael had demonstrated respect for Yitzchak, it would have indicated that he respected what Yitzchak represented: spirituality, morality, ethics and belief in Hashem. Yishmael's display of respect for Yitzchak, was not merely a demonstration of his good manners. It shows that he had changed; he had repented and now embraced what Yitzchak symbolized to him.

A great man shows respect to everyone - even those who are clearly on a lower echelon than he is. A great man respects everything that he is asked to do. Nothing is beneath him. Everything has value. The small-minded, insecure person hides behind a cloak of arrogance, and impugns the integrity of anyone who might pose a threat to his self-generated pedestal. He presents the greatest threat to society. Only one who has self-respect can give respect to others.

In memory of Rabbi Justin Hofmann - Harav Yekusiel ben Yosef z"l - Beloved husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather. niftar 25 Cheshvan 5770. Sofie Hofmann and family

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Orthodox Union / www.ou.org
Rabbi Weinreb's Parsha Column, Parshat Chayei Sarah
Sponsored in memory of Nathan and Louise Schwartz a"h
Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

"Abraham the Negotiator, Sarah the Queen"

Before I entered the classroom that evening, I already knew that Zalman would come prepared with some dazzling piece of scholarship. The regular reader of this column will remember that last week, the fourth session of the class I was leading using the book of Genesis to study leadership, it was Othniel who dominated the conversation. He had a dramatic story to tell about his personal background and also shared an important insight into the nature of effective leadership.

A natural rivalry was developing between Othniel and Zalman, each vying for the position of "class scholar." I was not the only one to notice this. Carol, the woman in the class who was always playing the "big sister" role to the men, opened the class discussion by turning to Zalman. "Zalman," she began, "I have no doubt that you are prepared with some remarkable observation about this week's Torah portion, Chayei Sarah. I know how competitive you are with Othniel, and last week he stole the show. I'd like to hear what you have to say."

Zalman face radiated with gratitude. "Thanks for the opening, Carol. I did find something extremely interesting and different, and I would like to share it with the class. But I'll try to be as brief as possible, and leave time for some of the others to comment."

Othniel graciously supported Zalman's declaration, saying, "I had more than my share of time last week, Zalman, so go right ahead."

Othniel began by summarizing the opening paragraphs of the parsha: Sarah's death, Abraham's eulogy and tears of grief, and the protracted negotiations between Abraham and the Hittites for the Cave of Machpelah, belonging to Efron the Hittite.

Then he launched into his thesis. "It strikes me," he said, raising his voice for emphasis, "that one of the skills absolutely necessary for a good leader is the ability to negotiate. I was impressed by Abraham's skill, political tact, and the human decency with which he negotiated—and achieved—his goal of purchasing an appropriate burial place for Sarah.

"But what I found particularly important was his knowledge of the business practices of the Hittites. He seemed to know exactly what to say, and that required some 'homework' on his part. I researched 'Hittites' and came across a fascinating article in a publication called the Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, February 1953.

"The article was written by someone I never heard of named Manfred Lehmann, and it is entitled Abraham's Purchase of Machpelah and Hittite Law. Lehmann points out that Abraham was thoroughly familiar with the laws of the Hittites, and that this is reflected in so much of the text describing the negotiations. For example, he points out that the Hittite landowner was obligated to pay taxes to the king. If he sold all of his property, the purchaser would be obligated to pay those taxes. But if he sold only part of his property, the purchaser would be exempt from those taxes, and the original property owner would have to pay them. This explains so many of the nuances of those negotiations, as Lehmann points out."

At this point, I could not contain myself. I interrupted and informed the class that I knew Dr. Lehmann as a scholar, collector of rare Hebrew books, philanthropist, and as the father of one of my dearest friends. I did have to confess that I was ignorant of this particular essay and was hearing about Abraham's expertise in Hittite law for the first time. Zalman was particularly gratified that he was able to disclose information which even the teacher did not know. I think that the rest of the class was also suitably impressed with Zalman's special efforts to bring this kind of new material into the class discussion. Sam, as was his wont, summed it up: "Negotiation is indeed an important leadership skill. And the negotiator must be familiar with the background of his opponent. But Abraham was also demonstrating another leadership skill; namely, expertise not only in one's own culture, but in the culture of others as well."

A brief period of quiet ensued, during which it was apparent that this topic was ended, and that the class was ready to embark upon a new direction in the conversation. But it wasn't just a new direction. It was a gender shift, as the three women, Carol, Miriam, and Priscilla, took charge.

Priscilla was the spokesperson for this triumvirate. "We are already five weeks into this course, and we have yet to identify a female leader. Carol, and Miriam and I have been discussing this vacuum and have decided that we would scour the text for women leaders, and would further argue that leadership requires a feminine touch. So for us, the important person in the parsha is Sarah. After all, it is her name that appears in the title of the parsha; an honor which neither Abraham nor Moses achieved."

I repressed my urge to argue that not all of those for whom a parsha is named are Biblical heroes, and that Balak, for one, was a cunning and persistent enemy of the Jewish people. Instead, I encouraged the three women to develop their argument. They did so, quickly demonstrating that they too were quite capable of erudition, and each had a scholarly gem to offer.

But the limited space of this column forces me to share only Carol's insight. Carol began by sharing her experience on a tour of Jewish sites in Eastern Europe. She had visited the city of Prague and paid her respects to the four hundred year old grave of the famed Torah scholar and Jewish leader, Maharal of Prague. She mentioned that her tour guide had pointed out the grave of another great sage, which usually went unnoticed, but was almost adjacent to that of the Maharal. It was the grave of Rabbi Ephraim of Lunshitz, the author of the Torah commentary, Kli Yakar.

"It was from that moment on," continued Carol, "that I purchased an English translation of Kli Yakar and regularly study one passage each week. This week, the author notes that Abraham first eulogized Sarah and only later wept for her. But the natural reaction, argues Kli Yakar, is to first weep for one's personal loss and only later eulogize the departed in terms of what he or she meant for others. He answers that Abraham knew two aspects of his wife Sarah. One was as his dear intimate life partner, and the other was as the Sarah whose very name meant "the leader," "the Queen," for all whom she brought close to the Almighty. When standing by her open grave, he postponed his personal grief and delayed his weeping. He wanted to describe her in terms of who she was for the public, for all the hundreds of people for whom she was a Sarah, a dynamic and compassionate leader. He wanted to teach us all that this woman was not only his wife, but was a leader in her own right. Hence, he eulogized her publicly first, and only later withdrew into the solitude of his private grief."

Sam summed it up: "This class is taking a new turn; indeed, it is reaching a new depth. Zalman has been able to take us to long forgotten, although recently unearthed, ancient Hittite law codes, but the women have taken us to one of the important current issues in Jewish leadership: the role of women, for which Sarah was certainly the first example."

Parsha Parables

**Stories & Anecdotes that Illuminate the Weekly Torah Portion and Holidays
Parshas Chayai Sora 5773 - November 9, 2012**

Dedicated by the Gluck family in memory of Milton Gluck

Enduring Kindness in the Sandy Desert . . . and in the Sandy Aftermath

Sandy has gone, and now has invited cousin Athena the Nor'easter to join in her hurt.

It is really hard to sit and write amidst so much confusion and devastation. Thought the last week and a half has been filled with much destruction and doom, there are also so many wonderful stories of hope and kindness, charity and hospitality.

Last night, as I drove back to the Five Towns from a Brooklyn-held wedding in blinding snow, I was thinking about what I would write this week.

This morning, I davened at the Young Israel of Woodmere, the shul I grew up in. I saw that shul grow from a storefront to a home to a majestic palace of prayer, Torah study and kindness. They were hit hard by the storm and only got power back yesterday. Entering the sanctuary, my heart almost stopped. I had been there earlier in the dark. But seeing the bare floors, their flooded carpets torn out, tables interspersed all through over the rooms each laden with possessions either to put their to dry out or for the taking, left me with a sense of despair. I met the Associate Rabbi, Sholom Axelrod, whose home like the home of Senior Rabbi Heshie Billet, was flooded and devastated and still has no power.

He could not help but, like most rabbis, wax theological, looking at the portion of the Torah that we read last week and that we will read this week. He offered some, and so did I.

The Torah began last week (Vayeirah) with Avraham taking strangers into his own home as if they were his closest kin. He fed them and washed their weary feet and prepared, together with his wife, delicious fare for them. In own community we repeat the outpouring of Hachnasas Ohrchim, where people are opening hearts and home to total strangers.

We read about the destruction of a city and utter devastation. We read about refugees, like Lot and his two daughters, and about the madness and irrational actions that despair can trigger. Seeing the madness and violence outside our community, I reflect as well.

We read about Avraham's trip to the Akeida and Har HaMoriah and his a test of faith.

I need not explain.

We learned a Medrash that says that Avraham was challenged in his mission by Satan who tried to stop him. "A river that suddenly rose to his neck, and Avraham was not deterred." That rising river is a scene that played out here in the Five Towns and Rockaways over and over again.

And we read about the sad death of Sora who according to the simple and literal explanation of the Midrash, passed away from heartbreak in hearing about the tragic circumstances. I personally know of illness and heart break, even heart attack wreaked by the events of this past week.

Rabbi Axelrod turned to me looked out at a half foot of snow, and asked, "Nu, and what do you say about this week?"

I thought for a moment and remembered what a Rebbe in our Yeshiva, who lives in Far Rockaway, perhaps only 200 yards from the Atlantic Ocean, told me. "It was two days after the storm. My first floor was totally flooded. Mold was beginning to form. I knew that if I did not rip out my carpets, I would have a crisis that would cost thousands more to repair. From nowhere a fellow stopped by. "No. Problem! I'll rip out your carpets! I'll take me about a half hour!"

"Thank you," said the rebbe. "You are so kind!"

As soon as he entered the house the man said, "It will be \$1000. Cash. Not one penny less."

The rabbi was flabbergasted, he hesitated a moment when the man said, "Are you paying?"

If not, I will go to the next guy!"

He had no choice, but to pay.

My neighbor who like us lost power for a week, had an "electrician" charge her \$4000 to rebuild a burnt out electric-box outside of her house and when the power went back on, she was still in the dark.

Then I thought of this week's portion Chayai Sora and the devious Efron. When the grieving Avraham approached him for a plot in which to bury Sarah, he replied, "Avraham, 'Hear us, my lord: you are a mighty prince among us; in the choice of our sepulchers (burial caves) bury your dead (wife); none of us shall withhold from you his burial caves, but that you may bury your dead'" (Genesis 23:2-6). And 'No, my lord, listen to me! I have given you the field, and the cave that is in it, I have given it to you. Before the eyes of the sons of my people, I have given it to you; bury your dead.'" (ibid v. 10-11). "Sure! Whatever you want and it's yours!" But when the deal get's closer, he suddenly gouges him! "My lord, listen to me: a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between me and you? Bury your dead.'" (ibid v. 14-15). According to current prices, the value of four hundred shekels of silver is way more than One million dollars! We are reliving the past through the Parsha.

But then I thought of the next story in the Torah portion, and I shared the following though with my students at Yeshiva and something that I am seeing in our community from every family, shul and community organizations like Achiezer. I may have written it in the past but it is worthy of repeating. Avraham send Eliezer on as quest to find a mate for Yitzchak. Eliezer traveled hundreds of miles to Charan, Avrams birthplace and the town in which he hopes to find a bride for his master's son. He conceived a plan ""So let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say (to me), 'Let down your pitcher, that I may drink; and she shall say, 'Drink, and I will give your camels drink also; let it be, she, that You have appointed for Your servant, for Yitzchak'" (Genesis 24:10).

Indeed, Rivka appeared and indeed said, "Drink, my lord' ... and when she was finished giving him to drink, she said: 'I will draw for your camels also, until they have finished drinking.'" The Torah continues, "She emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw, and drew for all his camels." The Torah describes Eliezer's reaction. "And the man looked in wonder and amazement about her, in a quiet quest to know whether the Hashem had made his journey successful or not."

It seems that Eliezer waited for something else before he felt truly confident enough to seal the deal. But nothing else really happened. Immediately after the camels finished drinking, the deal was sealed. Somehow, only then, did Eliezer know for all eternity that Rivka was "the one."

"And he said: 'Blessed be the Lord, the G-d of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His mercy and His truth toward my master; as for me, the Lord has led me in the way to the house of my master's brethren' "(ibid v.27).

What unsettles me is the sequential aspect of the story. Eliezer, made a sign with the Almighty. He would wait to see if a girl came and offered him and his camel to drink. Rivka graciously did that. After she began drawing water for the camel, he begins to truly wonder in amazement, "Is this the one?"

Yet, only after she finished giving the camels to drink does he decide that, indeed, she's the one.

What happened in between? How did wonder and amazement turn to certainty, from the time she offered to water the camels to the time she finished?

I looked around at what is going on here in our neighborhood, and this is what I want to share.

First some facts: The Torah only tells us that Rivka had a pitcher. The Torah mentions no other people. Eliezer had ten camels. Camels can drink approximately 30-50 gallons of water in ten minutes. Now calculate.

Eliezer had ten camels with him. They traveled across a sandy, dusty, dry desert! Rivka offered to give them to drink. She had one jug.

She needed to draw at least three hundred to five hundred gallons of water!

Now I know why he waited in quiet amazement. He felt good when she offered him a drink and offered drinks to the camels. But when she followed through in an amazing performance of unprecedented kindness, he was amazed. 300 gallons of water! She offered and did it. No shock. No regret. No renegeing. No complaints. All with a smile. That is the kindness he was looking for.

We also traveled through Sandy Roads, but it was not through a desert. It was through up to ten feet of water. And then we needed help. We needed kindness and we needed commitment.

You want to see that commitment? Come here. When the offices of Achiezer, a local aid and relief organization, were knocked out, Rabbi Boruch Ber Bender turned his dining room, into a call center. I saw ten volunteers men and women, adults and teens answering phones around his dining room table, while his one-week old baby cooed in the background.

Come here and see, the parking lot and building of Young Israel of Woodmere and Shor Yeshuv Institute, running off generators filled with people getting food, clothing, shelter, warmth, strength and hope distributed day and night.

Come here and join a family donating dozens of generators and the gasoline to run them instead of making a fancy Bar Mitzvah Party for their son.

Come to Chabad of the 5 Towns which is open from morning to night serving hot meals, arranging programs for children and a warm place just to come in and get warm smile and hug from the rabbi. Join the scores of our neighbors who went door-to-door of the elderly neighbors checking up on them and offering them food and blankets.

Come to our Yeshiva where we have become the new temporary home for another local Yeshiva and their 160 boys and the staff of from whose entire electrical system was destroyed in the flooding. See camaraderie, see friendship, see kindness, but most of all see the enduring commitment.

Come and see much more than lip-service. See why we are the grandchildren of the little girl, who may not have known what she was getting into when she made an offer. But, no matter how difficult it may have been, she never relented on her commitment to enduring kindness. And neither shall we.

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From Rabbi Chanan Morrison <ravkooklist@gmail.com>
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Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

Chayei Sarah: Isaac's Afternoon Prayer

"Isaac went out to meditate (la-su'ach) in the field toward evening." (Gen. 24:63)

The meaning of the word "la-su'ach" is unclear, and is the subject of a dispute among the Biblical commentators. The Rashbam (Rabbi Samuel ben Meir, twelfth century scholar) wrote that it comes from the word si'ach, meaning 'plant.' According to this interpretation, Isaac went to oversee his orchards and fields. His grandfather Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, 1040–1105), however, explained that la-su'ach comes from the word sichah, meaning 'speech.' Isaac went to meditate in the field, thus establishing the afternoon prayer.

Why doesn't the Torah use the usual Hebrew word for prayer? And is there a special significance to the fact that Isaac meditated in the afternoon?

The Soul's Inner Prayer

Rav Kook often expanded concepts beyond the way they are usually understood. Thus, when describing the phenomenon of prayer, he made a startling observation: "The soul is always praying. It constantly seeks to fly away to its Beloved." This is certainly an original insight into the essence of prayer. But what about the act of prayer that we are familiar with? According to Rav Kook, what we call 'prayer' is only an external expression of this inner prayer of the soul. In order to truly pray, we must be aware of the constant yearnings of the soul.

The word la-su'ach sheds a unique light on the concept of prayer. By using a word that also means 'plant,' the Torah is associating the activity of prayer to the natural growth of plants and trees. Through prayer, the soul flowers with new strength; it branches out naturally with inner emotions. These are the natural effects of prayer, just as a tree naturally flowers and sends forth branches.

Why was Isaac's meditative prayer said in the afternoon?

The hour that is particularly suitable for spiritual growth is the late afternoon, at the end of the working day. At this time of the day, we are able to put aside our mundane worries and concerns, and concentrate on our spiritual aspirations. Then the soul is free to elevate itself and blossom.

(Gold from the Land of Israel pp. 56-57. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I, p. 109)

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Weekly Halacha

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

To Borrow or not to Borrow?

Question: Is it permitted to borrow another person's tallis or tefillin without first asking him for permission?

Discussion: We generally assume that most people — even minors¹ — will be pleased to have others perform a mitzvah with their possessions if it costs them nothing,² especially since they, too, receive some credit for the mitzvah being performed by the borrower.³ Thus it is permitted, in many cases, for one to occasionally⁴ borrow another person's tallis, tefillin⁵ or lulav and esrog⁶ in order to fulfill the mitzvah. There are, however, some notable exceptions to this policy:

* We only assume that an owner will be pleased if a mitzvah is performed with his property; if the borrower suspects or knows otherwise, it may not be used without permission. Similarly, if the owner is present, we do not rely on the assumption that he will not object; he should be asked for permission directly.

* If the item is kept in a private locker, if it is brand new or if there are special circumstances for which reason the owner would not want it to be used, e.g., the borrower is ill, unkempt or unclean, it is forbidden to borrow it without permission.⁷

* The tallis or tefillin may not be removed from the premises (even if they will be returned), and they must be folded and put back exactly as they were found.⁸

Question: Is it permitted to borrow another person's sefer without first asking him for permission?

Discussion: Shulchan Aruch rules that the assumption mentioned in yesterday's Discussion — that an owner is pleased to have others perform a mitzvah with his property — does not apply to sefarim. This is because, unlike other ritual objects, sefarim tend to tear and could easily get damaged during learning. Mishnah Berurah⁹ rules in accordance with this view and prohibits borrowing any sefer, even for occasional use, without asking permission.

But several poskim suggest that nowadays, when sefarim are plentiful and inexpensive, we can assume that most owners will not object to others learning Torah from their sefarim, especially if the sefer is used only occasionally.¹⁰ In addition, some poskim maintain that leaving a sefer in a shul or a yeshiva is an indication that the owner wants his sefer to be used by others to learn Torah.¹¹

Question: Does the prohibition of ribbis apply to neighbors borrowing goods from each other, or does it apply only to money-lending and business deals?

Discussion: The prohibition of ribbis applies to goods borrowed between neighbors. A neighbor who borrows one challah may return only one challah to the lender. If a 5 lb. bag of sugar is borrowed, only that amount may be returned.¹² There are, however, several notable exceptions to this prohibition:

* If the difference between the item borrowed and the item returned is insignificant to the degree that people generally do not care about, the prohibition does not apply; a slightly bigger homemade challah, therefore, may be returned, since homemade challo—as opposed to store-bought challo—are not held to an exact weight.¹³

* Neighbors (or members of a club, etc.) who have a type of relationship where they constantly borrow from each other without being careful to return everything they borrow, do not run afoul of the prohibition of ribbis. This is because the neighbors are not "borrowing" from each other; they are giving each other gifts.¹⁴ [Note that many neighbors do not have such a relationship.]

* When a borrower is uncertain of the precise amount he borrowed, he may return an amount which is great enough to assure that the loan is

paid up. It is preferable that the borrower stipulate that any extra return is an outright gift.¹⁵

* A neighbor or friend who borrows a food item may return that item exactly as borrowed, even if the price of the item has gone up in the interval. This is permitted because prices tend to fluctuate by small amounts and neighbors and friends generally are not particular about such a small difference.¹⁶

Question: Is it an obligation to lend money to another Jew, or is it merely an optional act of chesed?

Discussion: The mitzvah of lending money to another Jew in need is a mitzvah chiyuvit, an obligatory mitzvah, similar to any other mitzvah in the Torah. One who has money that he could lend, and refuses a direct request to lend another Jew money, transgresses the mitzvah of im kesef talveh es ami, which Chazal interpret as an obligation on the lender.¹⁷

One is exempt from the obligation to lend money only when the lender truly believes that he will not be repaid, either because he does not trust the borrower to pay back or because he does not believe it possible that the borrower will have the means with which to pay him back. Still, if he could assure himself of repayment by obtaining collateral from the borrower, he is required to do so and may not refuse the latter's direct request for a loan.¹⁸

Question: If a lender feels that he cannot lend money to a potential borrower because he does not trust him, may he avoid insulting him by telling him that he has no funds available?

Discussion: In such a case, he may respond that he has no money to lend. The real meaning of his response is that he has no money to lend to him, which is a true statement and not considered a lie at all.

The same holds true when someone that you do not trust asks to borrow a car or any other item that you do not want to lend to him. You may say that the car is not available or you may use any other excuse which will not offend the person asking for the item.¹⁹

1 Igros Moshe, O.C. 2:107.

2 Pesachim 4b.

3 Mekor Chayim, O.C. 14:4.

4 But not on a regular basis; Mishnah Berurah 14:13.

5 Rama, O.C. 14:4

6 Rama, O.C. 649:5. This applies only from the second day of Succos on, since on the first day one must own his lulav and esrog in order to fulfill the mitzvah.

7 See Aruch ha-Shulchan, O.C. 14:11-12.

8 Mishnah Berurah 14:13-15.

9 14:16, quoting Peri Megadim. See also Beis Baruch 11:167.

10 See Aruch ha-Shulchan 14:13; Ma'aseh Ish, vol. 4, pg. 142 and Likutei Mehariach. Harav Y.S. Elyashiv is quoted (Mamon Yisrael, pg. 65) as ruling leniently on this issue.

11 See Minchas Yitzchak 7:130, based on Beir ha-Gra, C.M. 163:95. See also Chesed l'Alafim 14:15.

12 See Y.D. 160:17.

13 See Chelkas Binyamin 162:21. But it is forbidden to return a bigger bakery challah, since those are regulated by weight and size. See Ashrei ha-Ish, Y.D. 14:10.

14 Halichos Yisrael, The Laws of Ribbis, pg. 35. See Chelkas Binyomin 160:79.

15 Minchas Yitzchak 6:161; 9:88-2; Bris Yehudah 5:10. See Chelkas Binyomin 160:33.

16 Mishnah Berurah 450:2 based on Rama, Y.D. 162:1. See Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 450:4.

17 Ahavas Chesed, Halva'ah 1:1.

18 Ahavas Chesed, Halva'ah 1:8 and Nesiv ha-Chesed 13.

19 See Shalmei Moed, pg. 537, quoting Harav Y. Y. Kanievsky and Harav S.Z. Auerbach. See also Titen Emes l'Yaakov 5:15 for several sources for this ruling. Weekly-Halacha, Weekly Halacha, Copyright © 2010 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Torah.org.

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By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

A Layman's Guide to some Halachic Aspects of Jewish Weddings By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1:

"A friend's son in Yeshiva in Israel got engaged to a local girl, and my friends were told that there will be a tena'im. I thought only chassidische families do this."

Question #2:

"I was told that I should not include quotations from pesukim on my daughter's wedding invitation. Yet I see that 'everyone' does! Could you please explain the halacha?"

Question #3:

"I wish someone could walk me through all the halachic steps that we need in planning our daughter's wedding. I am afraid that I'll forget to take care of something."

From the Engagement to the Wedding

Mazel tov!! Mazel tov!! Your daughter just became engaged to an amazing Yeshiva bachur from a wonderful family. You are in seventh heaven!

Everyone plans some type of formal celebration when his or her child becomes engaged. Some call it a "lechayim," others a "vort," and still others a "tena'im". In Israel today, they call it an erusin, although the misuse of this word often bothers me, since the word erusin in halacha does not mean engagement, but the first step of the marriage ceremony, as I will explain shortly.

Unrelated to this question, I am going to note only one halachic issue that is affected by the engagement: does one sign tena'im shortly after announcing the engagement? In Hassidische circles, and in Eretz Yisrael even among "Israeli Litvishe" families, it is accepted that one finalizes the engagement by signing tena'im, which is an agreement between the two sets of parents what each will provide for their child before the wedding and to conduct the wedding before a certain agreed-upon date. The climax of the engagement celebration is when this document is signed, read aloud, and the two mothers break a plate together.

In "American" non-hassidische circles, these arrangements are more informal, and the two parties usually do not sign any formal tena'im. Some sign a type of a tena'im at the wedding prior to the chupah.

Invitations

There actually are a few halachos about printing invitations. One should not quote any pesukim in invitations and, according to most authorities, the wording of an invitation should not use ksav ashuris, the Hebrew writing used for Sifrei Torah, Tefillin and Mezuzos (Shu't Rav Pe'alim, Yoreh Deah 4:32). This is because ksav ashuris has sanctity and should not be used for mundane matters (Shu't Radbaz 1:45; Rama, Yoreh Deah 284:2; Pischei Teshuvah, Yoreh Deah 283:3). We should note that the Kesav Sofer writes that his father, the Chasam Sofer, permitted using ksav ashuris in wedding invitations and did so himself, contending that since making a wedding is a mitzvah, the invitation to the seudas mitzvah is not considered mundane use. Nevertheless, the Kesav Sofer concludes that it is better not to use ksav ashuris for invitations (Shu't Kesav Sofer, Even HaEzer #22 at end).

Shomrim

Why do the chosson and kallah require shomrim? From what time do the chosson and kallah require shomrim?

The Gemara says that three people require a shomer: an ill person, a chosson and a kallah (Berachos 54b). Although many people have the custom of providing shomrim from the ufruf Shabbos, technically the chosson and kallah require shomrim only from the actual wedding through the week of sheva berachos. The prevalent practice is that this includes only when they leave their house. This means that during sheva berachos week, the chosson may attend minyan only if someone escorts him from his house, although some hold that a chosson can go to shul without a shomer (told to me in the name of Rav Moshe Feinstein).

Although I am unaware of any halachic source to this practice, it is common custom to provide the chosson and kallah with shomrim on the day of the wedding also.

Things to Bring to the Wedding

The following can function as a useful checklist of items that should be brought to the wedding:

(1) Kesubah

From personal experience, I suggest bringing not only the kesubah one intends to use, but also several blank, extra forms. In a different article, I noted the many mistakes to watch out for when writing or filling out a kesubah.

(2) Kittel

If the choson will wear one.

(3) Candles and Matches

Four candles for the shushbinin, who are the two couples that will escort the choson and kallah, and matches with which to light the candles. The matches are also useful in the creation of ashes that will be placed on the choson's forehead before he walks to the chupah.

(4) Wine

Many deliberately bring a bottle of white wine, an approach that I advocate, to avoid concerns of red wine staining a white wedding dress. (I am aware of some poskim who prefer that one use red wine at a chupah. However, I prefer white wine, since it spares the worry of a stained gown.)

(5) Berachos

Cards, or something similar, with all the berachos for the various honorees.

(6) Ring

The wedding ring. This should be a ring without a precious stone (Even HaEzer 31:2). Some rabbonim prefer that it have no design at all. It is important that the ring be the property of the choson. In other words, the choson must either purchase it with his own money, or whoever purchased it must give it to the choson as a gift and the choson must lift it up for the purpose of acquiring it. So, if the bride wants to use her late greatgrandmother's wedding ring, they should make sure that the current rightful owner of that ring gives it to the choson, with no strings attached, prior to the wedding.

(7) Glass

A well-wrapped glass that will be broken. (Note that the Rama [Even HaEzer 65:3] states that the choson should break the glass that was used to hold the wine of the wedding beracha. Although I have seen this actually practiced, it is definitely not the common contemporary custom.)

(8) Also, make sure that someone has the key to the yichud room!

Wow!! We have actually gotten all the way to the wedding! What happens next?

The Choson Tish

If the tena'im were not performed earlier, some people make a tena'im now. If the tena'im will take place at the wedding, then one should also have a plate to break. In the United States, the kesubah is filled out and signed at the choson tish, whereas in Eretz Yisrael, many follow the practice of not signing the kesubah until the chupah itself. There is halachic basis to this approach.

At this point, we will introduce the mesader kiddushin, the talmid chacham who is honored with making certain that the halachic aspects of the wedding are performed correctly.

Kabalas Kinyan

Following the instructions of the mesader kiddushin, the choson lifts up a pen, handkerchief or other item as a means of kinyan in the presence of two witnesses. By doing this, he assumes the financial responsibilities of a husband and future father.

Should we use the Same Witnesses?

There are two prevalent practices, both usually dependent on the preference of the mesader kiddushin. The more common American practice is that each part of the ceremony, the signing of the kesubah, the kiddushin itself, and the yichud be witnessed by different sets of witnesses, in order to honor more people. In Eretz Yisrael, the common practice is to have one set of witnesses for all the stages. The Tashbeitz (2:7) explains that once one honored someone with performing a mitzvah, we encourage that person to continue and perform the rest of the mitzvah (hamaschil bemitzvah omrim lo gemor). (For another reason for this custom, see the Eizer MiKodesh at the end of Even HaEzer 42.)

Signing of the Kesubah

After the choson makes the kabalas kinyan, the witnesses carefully read through the kesubah and then sign it (Rama, Even HaEzer 66:1 and Choshen Mishpat 45:2). If they are attesting to something by signing, they must know what it is.

Choson Signing Kesubah

Many have the practice of the choson also signing the kesubah beneath the witnesses' signatures. This practice dates back to the times of the Rishonim, and demonstrates that the choson approves what the witnesses are signing (Rashba, Bava Basra 175; Eizer MiKodesh 66:1 s.v. hayah ta'usa).

Bedeken

The choson, escorted by the two fathers and accompanied by the celebrants, now goes to badek the kallah, by pulling the veil over her head. At this point, the kallah's father and perhaps others bless her. The celebrants then proceed to the chupah. In

Eretz Yisrael, there is a fairly common custom to have eidim witness the bedeken, although the halachic basis for this practice is weak.

The Chupah

The chupah itself should ideally be open on all four sides (Eizer MiKodesh). This is reminiscent of the tent of Avraham Avinu and Sarah Imeinu, whose tent was accessible from all four directions of the globe, so as not to inconvenience any potential guests. We are conveying blessing upon the bride and groom that the house they build together be as filled with chesed as the house of Avraham and Sarah was.

Immediately prior to walking to the chupah, the mesader kiddushin places some ashes on the choson's forehead. The ashes are placed where the choson wears his tefillin and are immediately removed; they serve to remind the choson that even at this moment of tremendous joy, he should remember that our Beis HaMikdash lies in ruin. This literally fulfills the verse in Yeshayah (61:3) Lasum la'veilei tziyon lasei lahem pe'er tachas eifer, "To place on the mourners of Zion and to give them splendor instead of ashes," where the Navi promises that in the future we will replace the ashes that currently remind us of the churban (Even HaEzer 65:3).

Chupah under the Stars

The prevalent Ashkenazic practice is that the chupah is conducted outdoors or under an open skylight, in order to provide a beracha for the marrying couple that their descendants be as numerous as the stars (Rama, Even HaEzer 61:1).

However, if a couple prefers to hold their chupah under a roof, the mesader kiddushin should still perform the wedding ceremony for them, since there is no violation in performing the chupah this way (Shu't Igros Moshe, Even HaEzer 1:93).

Jewelry at the Chupah

There is a common custom that the kallah removes all her jewelry before she goes to the chupah. Some explain that this custom is based on the Mishnah that, after the Churban of the Beis HaMikdash, Chazal decreed that the choson and kallah should no longer wear the crowns they were accustomed to wearing (Sotah 49a). Although removing jewelry may be associated with this idea, most authorities understand this to be a custom borrowed from this idea, but not a required practice. If it were required, then wearing jewelry would be prohibited from the night before the wedding until the end of sheva berachos (see Mishnah Berurah 560:17). The accepted halachic ruling is that the only jewelry that is prohibited is that containing silver, gold or precious stones worn on her head (Mishnah Berurah 560:17, quoting Pri Megadim; however, note that the Yam shel Shelomoh, Gittin 1:19, rules that a kallah may not wear any silver or gold jewelry the entire sheva berachos week. This approach is not usually followed.)

Wearing a Kittel

The common practice among Eastern European Jews is that the choson wears a kittel at the chupah. The wearing of the kittel is to remind the choson that the wedding day is his personal day of atonement and to encourage him to do teshuvah on this day.

When does he don the kittel? There are two common practices; some have the choson wear the kittel folded up under his suit jacket, whereas others have the kittel placed on top of his suit as soon as he stands under the chupah, and remove the kittel either immediately after the chupah or in the cheder yichud.

The accepted practice is that the shushbin places the kittel on the choson. His "dressing" the choson reinforces the idea that the wedding day is a day of teshuvah and atonement – it should remind the choson, when he puts on the kittel the first time, of when he will be wearing his kittel for the last time (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 147:4).

Who walks them down?

The choson and kallah are escorted by two couples, called the shushbinin, who are usually their parents. There is an old custom that the two shushbinin couples should both be couples who are married in their first marriage (cited by Eizer MiKodesh 68:2, who says that he is uncertain of the origin of this custom). Some have the custom that a woman who is visibly pregnant should not serve as shushbin (Shearim Hametzuyananim Bahalacha 147:12). Since these practices are custom and not halacha, if following them may create a dispute, shalom is more important.

There are two common practices as to who, specifically, escorts the choson and who escorts the kallah. Some have the custom that the choson is escorted by the two male shushbinin, and the kallah by the two female shushbinin, whereas others have each escorted by a couple. To decide what to do, I quote a well-known practice of Rav Yaakov Kamenetski, who at three of his children's marriages had the shushbinin walk as couples and in the other three, fathers escorting the choson and mothers escorting the kallah. His rule: I did whatever the mechutan preferred. Kallah in the Right

Based on a verse in Tehillim (45:10) that teaches that the place of honor for a princess is to be stationed on the right, the kallah stands to the right and the choson on the left.

Standing at the Chupah

In America, the guests usually sit throughout the chupah ceremony, whereas in Eretz Yisrael the standard practice is that everyone stands throughout the chupah. The latter practice, or, more specifically, that everyone stands at the wedding while the sheva berachos are recited, is quoted in the name of the Zohar (see Shu't HaElef Lecha Shelomoh, Even HaEzer #115).

Erusin and Nesuin

There are two stages to a Jewish wedding. The first stage is called kiddushin or erusin (not to be confused with the Modern Hebrew word erusin, which means "engagement"), and revolves around the choson giving the wedding ring to the kallah. The second step is called nesuin. In Talmudic times, these two stages were conducted separately – often as much as a year apart. After kiddushin, the couple was legally married, but did not yet live together. Today, the two stages are conducted as one long ceremony.

Is the Kallah's face covered?

The Rama (31:2) cites an old Ashkenazi custom that the kallah's face is covered at her chupah. The Rama does not say how thick the veil is, although we find a dispute among later authorities about this. Some authorities object strongly to the kallah wearing a veil that is so thick that the witnesses cannot identify her (Mabit, quoted by Pischei Teshuvah 31:5). Others rule that it is not problematic for the veil to be this thick, and therefore, in many places, the custom was that the kallah wore a very thick veil.

The mesader kiddushin recites the beracha of borei pri hagafen on behalf of the choson and the kallah. They should have in mind to be included in his beracha and not to interrupt before they drink the wine (see Afikei Yam 2:2; according to Shu't Noda Beyehuda, Even HaEzer #1 the choson should also have in mind to be included in the birchas erusin, but Shu't Har Tzvi, Orach Chayim #44 quotes from the Tevuos Shor, Rabbi Akiva Eiger and several others that the birkas erusin is not a chiyuv of the choson.) The choson and kallah then sip from the cup. Some have the practice that the mesader kiddushin gives the choson to drink, whereas other have the choson's father give him to drink, and then the cup is handed to the kallah's mother, who gives her to drink. The choson and kallah need to drink only a small sip of the wine (Be'er Heiteiv, Even HaEzer 34:6; Amudei Apiryon page 71). Yichud Eidim

On behalf of the choson, the mesader kiddushin appoints the two witnesses, and then asks the witnesses, within earshot of the kallah, whether the ring is worth a perutah, the value of which is only a few cents. The reason for this strange conversation is so that the kallah agrees to be married even if the ring is worth so little (Rama, Even HaEzer 31:2).

According to many authorities, the witnesses must see the choson place the ring on the kallah's finger (Shu't HaRashba 1:780; Rama, Even HaEzer 42:4). Although most authorities rule that this is not essential, the accepted practice is to be certain that the witnesses see the actual placing of the ring on the kallah's finger (Pischei Teshuvah, Even HaEzer 42:12).

Reading the Kesubah

At this point, the kesubah is read in order to interrupt between the erusin and the nesuin, and then the sheva berachos are recited. Although some authorities question how one can divide the sheva berachos among different honorees, the accepted practice is to divide them among six, and in some places seven, honorees (Shu't Igros Moshe, Even HaEzer #94; cf. Har Tzvi).

Out of order

Mistakes are commonly recited in the order of the sheva berachos. One should be careful to make sure that each person being honored knows which beracha he is reciting. If the wrong beracha is recited, such that the berachos are now recited out of order, one should not repeat a beracha, but recite the skipped beracha followed by the remaining berachos that have as yet not been said. Similarly, if the honoree began reciting the wrong beracha, including Hashem's name, he should complete the beracha he has begun, the omitted beracha should then be said, and then proceed to recite the remaining berachos. If someone began reciting either the beracha of Sos tasis or Samayach tesamach, which does not begin with Hashem's name, out of order, one should correct the situation to recite the correct beracha (Amudei Apiryon page 76).

Putting his Foot down

After the sheva berachos are completed, the choson smashes a glass (Rama, Even HaEzer 65:3). (According to an alternative practice, the choson smashes the glass earlier in the ceremony -- immediately after the kiddushin are completed.) Many have the custom that prior to breaking the glass, the choson or the audience sings or

recites the pasuk, "im eshkacheich Yerushalayim." This custom has sources in Rishonim (Sefer Hachassidim #392).

The choson and kallah are then escorted with music and dancing to the yichud room. Two witnesses, called the eidei yichud, see that there is no one else in the yichud room and then post themselves outside for the amount of time that the mesader kiddushin has instructed them.

Conclusion

Rav Hirsch (Bereishis 24:67) notes that the Torah tells us that Yitzchak married Rivkah and only then mentions that he loved her. A Torah-dik marriage is based predominantly on reason and judgment – this couple seem uniquely suited to one another in their goals, aspirations and personalities. In these marriages, the better and longer the couple knows one another, the more they love one another. The wedding is indeed the beginning of a happy marriage and many healthy years together.