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**Rabbi Benjamin Yudin**  
**The Rope Connection**

After the describing passing of Avraham, Parshas Chayei Sarah ends with a cryptic description of the nation Yishmael, "Al pnei kol echav nafal - over all his brothers he dwelt" (Bereishis 25:18.) Rashi tells us the term "nafal - dwelt" is interchangeable with "schachein - to dwell." However, the Medrash Rabba (Bereishis 62:5) understands the use of "nafal" here to be literal, i.e. meaning "to fall", as an indication that after the death of Avraham the quality of Yishmael's life declined.

The Ba'al Haturim[1] notes that the verse describing the falling of Yishmael is juxtaposed to the opening verse of Parshas Toldos (25:19), "And these are the offspring of Isaac", to teach that when Yishmael will fall in the end of days then the Moshiach, the son of Dovid and descendant of Yitzchack, will sprout. The Ba'al Haturim wrote this commentary approximately 700 years ago. It not only brought comfort to the Jews of Toledo, Spain where his illustrious father found refuge after having to flee Germany, but uplifts us and provides encouragement today as well. The Ba'al Haturim bases his prediction on the Yalkut Shimoni (Bereishis 79).

There will be an end of days and the redemption will come! The prophet Isaiah (60:22) proclaims "b'eita achishena - in its time I will hasten it". The Talmud (Sanhedrin 98a) notes the apparent contradiction in saying that the redemption will come "in its time" and simultaneously saying "I will hasten it". The resolution of this contradiction is taught in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi who explained zachu achishena - if the Jewish people are virtuous and meritorious then He will hasten the redemption, if not it will come in its preordained time.

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 98b) further provides the formula for achishena: they asked Rabbi Elazar how to mitigate and best prepare for the end of days? He responded that one should study Torah and increase the performance of good deeds. The former is clearly delineated in Bava Basrah 8a and Sanhedrin 99b. It is the latter that we wish to focus on.

We are living in most difficult and challenging times. The new enemy is none other than teenagers who have been taught since kindergarten that to spill Jewish blood is noble and praiseworthy. We feel so helpless. Thus, we not only have to increase our security, but to really believe that our positive acts of kindness effect the Higher Realm.

To begin with, we are taught daily in recitation of the second paragraph of Shema (Devarim 11:13) that just as when man plants seeds in the ground, it

yields its return and produce, similarly, when man plants mitzvos and ma'asim tovim they yield a Divine return and bounty.

In his commentary on the verse from the Shira, "You led with your kindness, this nation you redeemed" (Shemos 15:13) the Chofetz Chaim cites the Tana D'bei Eliyahu (23) that teaches that while according to the literal understanding the "kindness" refers to Hashem's kindness in taking us out of Egypt, the Rabbis understand the verse to refer to the many kindnesses members of the fledgling nation did for one another in Egypt, making them worthy of redemption. The Chofetz Chaim further teaches in his Chomas Hadas (chapter 14) that when a divine decree of judgment looms over the Jewish Nation, they must offset this decree with an abundance of chessed.

In Parshas Chayei Sara we have a strange phenomenon. The Torah most often is concise and precise in stating its laws. Most often without the oral law, one cannot decipher and observe the written law. Yet in regards to the finding of a mate for Yitzchack the Torah devotes sixty seven verses. Not only is this the longest chapter in the book of Bereishis, but it is one of the longest chapters in the entire Torah. What emerges and jumps out at the reader is the emphasis placed upon chessed as the criteria to marry Yitzchack, as well as Rivkah's excessive performance of chessed. Could she not ask Eliezer for a cup, rather than literally pouring the water into his mouth? Could she not ask Eliezer or one of his drivers to assist in the drinking of the ten camels? This excessive chessed proves her worthiness to join the house of Avraham. In the beginning of Vayeira we find Avraham's hospitality being extreme. They were both emulating none other than Hashem Himself whose chessed is constant and is beyond measure and human comprehension.

We must take the message to heart. Just as Shmuel Hanavi admonishes King Shaul, "if you are insignificant in your own personal assessment, you are the leader of Israel" we must internalize that with so much assimilation and intermarriage each Torah observant family and individual is that much more important and significant and charged with bringing the geulah. Your chessed counts. While compared to some others we might feel truly humble, many of us have knowledge of Judaism that is way beyond a beginner who is searching for an introduction to Jewish life, values, and teachings.

Partners in Torah is an excellent way to spend a meaningful hour once a week talking on the phone with an individual who could be hundreds of miles away; the closeness that develops and the benefits are significant for both study partners. I must believe there is a Tomchei Shabbos or Meals on Wheels in your community that delivers meals to the elderly and shut-ins. If there is not one, then start one. If you drive, find those few hours to deliver not only needed food but a smile and companionship. Take your children or grandchildren once a month to visit a senior citizen's residence and let them draw pictures for them and interact with them, as this initiation can be so significant for their healthy development and let alone the seniors.

Rav Chaim Volozhiner (Nefesh HaChaim Gate 1 Chapter 3) teaches that Hashem created man and appointed him to rule over the multitudes of powers and numberless worlds, to govern them via all the minute details of his actions, speech and thoughts, whether for good or heaven-forefend the opposite. Moreover he understands the Talmudic teaching (Berachos 64a) "call them your builders rather than your sons", for they arrange the lofty worlds as a builder arranges a structure and invests it with great strength. In chapter 7 he understands (Tehillim 121:5) "Hashem tzilcha - Hashem is your protective shade" as "He is your shadow" - just as a shadow's movement mirrors the movement of the actual person or object, similarly Hashem moves the worlds based on the movements and intentions and man's actions below.

In his drasha before Selichos Rav Chaim Volozhiner interpreted the verse (Devarim 32:9) "Yaakov chevel nachalasecha" literally, i.e. Jacob is the measure of His inheritance. Following Rashi's interpretation of "chevel" as "rope" he ingeniously interpreted the verse to mean Jacob is the rope of His inheritance. There is, as it were, a rope descending from Heaven to the Earth. When man moves the rope in this world it reverberates on high.

Finally, in response to Moshe's request as to what answer he should give the nation when they ask who commissioned him, Hashem says "I shall be as I shall be" (Shemos 3:14). The Ramban quotes the Medrash Agadah that Hashem was teaching the following lesson: as the Jewish nation acts towards Him, that is the way He reciprocates in kind. If the people open their hearts and hands and act

charitably, so will Hashem return the favor. Parshas Chayei Sara teaches that our response to the excess terror in the world is excess chessed.

[1] The commentary on the Chumash written by Rabbi Yaakov the son of the Rosh, who also authored the monumental original Code of Jewish Law - the Arba Turim

<http://5tjt.com/praying-on-the-temple-mount/>  
Nov. 5, 2015

## Praying On The Temple Mount

### Halachic Musings

By Rabbi Yair Hoffman

Recently, the National Council of Young Israel, under the direction of Farley Weiss, issued the following statement regarding the Temple Mount: “The National Council of Young Israel strenuously denounces the double standard that exists in relation to prayer on the Temple Mount. It is wholly unacceptable that Muslims are permitted to pray at this holy site but Jews and Christians are prohibited from doing so. People of all faiths should be permitted to pray at the Temple Mount.”

The sentiment behind the NCYI statement resonates deeply within the heart of every Jew. This is Har HaBayis we are talking about. Everyone wants to see it remain in Jewish hands. The fact that after nearly two millennia the Temple Mount is back in Jewish hands is a source of deep pride; the fact that the Waqf seems to be in charge of it, however, is a source of sadness.

#### The Two Issues

There are two perhaps conflicting halachic issues that need to be discussed. The first is the issue of “Lo sechaneim”—the prohibition of giving over land that is in Jewish hands in Eretz Yisrael to gentiles (see Shulchan Aruch YD 151:8 and Rambam Hilchos Avodah Zarah 10:3–4). Allowing the Waqf to exercise ownership control of Har HaBayis is probably the apogee of “lo sechaneim” violations.

The second issue is that of advocating avodahzarah worship on Har HaBayis. To call for “people of all faiths” to be permitted to pray at the Temple Mount is, at best, a highly questionable thing to ask for—notwithstanding the laudable origin of the idea of not giving up Har HaBayis.

The question boils down to whether we say in matters of halachah that the ends justify the means. Do we advocate for a matter that would seem prohibited in order to attempt to retain full possession and active control of Har HaBayis? We must also explore which is worse: violating lo sechaneim or the aiding and abetting of avodahzarah.

#### Lo Sechaneim

The prohibition of buying and selling on Shabbos is a rabbinic one. The reason for it is to prevent people from violating the Torah prohibition of writing on Shabbos. However, there is an exception to the rabbinic prohibition of conducting transactions on Shabbos: the halachah is that when purchasing land in Eretz Yisrael from gentile hands, it is permitted to violate the prohibition of amira l’akum in order to facilitate the sale on Shabbos itself! We see from this halachah how important this ideal is. If this is true for land in all of Eretz Yisrael, how much more so must it be true for Har HaBayis.

#### Avodah Zarah

The issue of avodahzarah is also not inconsequential. The Torah is replete with verses that discuss how much we must distance ourselves from it. Avodahzarah is the antithesis of Hashem’s design or Master Plan for the world.

Rav Yitzchok Isaac Sher once asked (Leket Sichos Mussar Vol. II #134) what the significance is of the statement in our Hoshanos—Hoshana Goren Arnon. Why does it matter if Har HaBayis was a storage house for grain? What is the value in that?

Rav Sher explained it based upon a statement of Rabbi Akiva, that any beautiful place initially was a place where idol-worship flourished. Har HaBayis miraculously never served in that capacity (see Ramban A.Z. 46b).

Similarly, in the Kinnos of Tishah B’Av, we recite, “Al Har Tziyon she’shamaim—oy—ki nitan alav shikutz m’shamaim,” “And on the Mountain of Zion—woe!—for it has been given to abominations.” The meaning is that avodahzarah was placed on Har Tzion. How can we possibly advocate for that?

#### But Is It Avodah Zarah?

Most mainstream Christian denominations believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, in one form or another, that would fit into the technical definition of

avodahzarah. They teach that G-d is simultaneously three distinct hypostases who are coeternal, coequal, and indivisibly united in One Being.

In his classic work the Philosophy of the Church Fathers, Professor Harry Austryn Wolfson (a former student of the Slabodka Yeshiva), the first to head the Department of Judaic Studies at Harvard University, went through every explanation of the Church fathers’ understanding of the Trinity—and each of these explanations still would be considered avodahzarah. The Rambam (Hilchos Ma’achalos Asuros 11:7 and in Peirush HaMishnayos) states that it is considered avodahzarah (see Frankel uncensored edition). And while there are those who read a more moderate view in Tosfos Sanhedrin (63b), the majority view of scholars who have studied this Tosfos is not in accordance with this reading.

#### Groups That Are Not Avodah Zarah

Are there modern Christian groups that would not halachically be considered ovdei avodah zarah? There are. According to this author’s research, they constitute two types. First, there are those who are members of mainstream denominations of Christianity that do not truly share the theology of their denomination. Their conceptualization of the nature of G-d is what Rav Elchonon Wasserman describes as intuitive. In an unofficial survey, a good percentage of America falls under this category.

There is also the view found in some poskim that modern-day practitioners of the religion are just following the ways of their parents (ma’aseh avoseihem b’yadeihem), and do not truly believe in the theological underpinnings (see Shulchan Aruch, Y.D. 148:12; Bach ibid.; Responso Yehudah Yaaleh YD #170).

Second, there are members of denominations that even today do not subscribe to a Trinitarian doctrine. Some of these denominations could be construed as believers in shittuf, but not true avodahzarah. They are Christadelphians, Christian Scientists, Dawn Bible Students, Friends General Conference, Iglesia ni Criso, J’s Witnesses, Living Church of G, Oneness Pentecostals, Members Church of G International, Unitarian Universalist Christians, The Way International, the Church of G International, and the United Church of G.

#### The Ran’s View

Parenthetically, there is also the Ran’s view (Sanhedrin 61b) that belief in any religion other than Judaism is considered avodah zarah. He says the following: “Even Christian saints, and Muslims who believe in the leader of the Ishmaelites, although their followers do not consider them gods per se, by virtue of the fact that they bow to them in order to acknowledge the human incarnation of their divinities, they are all considered avodahzarah.”

This view of the Ran pertains to our question because if this view is correct, then the NCYI statement is not doing anything worse by replacing one group of ovdei avodah zarah with another group. Most authorities, however, do not consider this Ran authoritative.

#### Weighing The Consequences

Getting back to the topic of the two conflicting issues, of “Lo sechaneim” versus advocating further avodahzarah on the Temple Mount, there is a fascinating Ran on the Rif in Shabbos (4a). The Ran writes that violating a minor prohibition in order to save oneself from a more major prohibition is only allowed when that minor prohibition is a rabbinic violation. The clear indication is that when dealing with a Torah prohibition—even if it is less consequential than a second Torah prohibition—we do not violate it.

We have not even mentioned the question of which prohibition is worse, encouraging idol worship on the Temple Mount or allowing for less Jewish supervision on the Temple Mount. Regardless, even if it were a lesser prohibition, we should not be advocating for such a position.

There is also a fascinating Nefesh HaChaim (found at the end of Shaar 1 and also Shaar 3) that discusses the sin of the daughters of Lot. He writes that prior to Matan Torah, we would serve Hashem based on the ultimate outcome to be accomplished. Therefore, prior to the giving of the Torah, the daughters’ actions were permissible. After the giving of the Torah, where it is not up to each individual to make such decisions, it would be prohibited. The parallel in our case would be that one may not advocate for idol-worship on Har HaBayis in order to retain more control on Har HaBayis.

#### Finding Leniencies

An argument could perhaps be made that in light of the danger of losing Har HaBayis, one could take the lenient position mentioned above that it is just

ma'aseh avoseihem b'yadeihem and they are not active idol-worshippers; but it is still a minority view, and most scholars who have studied this position in the mefarshim claim that it is being misapplied.

Perhaps one can also argue that those who do go up and pray are not so familiar with the technical aspects of their theology. This is not tenable either, because, as a general rule, those who do pray are more familiar with the theology than those who believe in G-d but don't pray regularly.

The National Council of Young Israel has always been in the forefront of standing up for EretzYisrael and for numerous issues that are important to KlalYisrael. Its advocacy and efforts on behalf of KlalYisrael are consistently on the mark. It is this author's view, however, that regarding this issue, NCYI should adjust its statement to conform better with the halachos discussed above. May Hashem grant us peace and bring yeshuos and nechamos to KlalYisrael and the world.

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## FEEDING ONE'S ANIMALS

### Rabbi Michael Taubes

When Avraham Avinu's servant meets Rivkah at the well, she gives him some water to drink and then gives water to all of his camels as well (Bereishit 24:18-20). Citing a Posuk elsewhere in the Torah (Devarim 11:15), however, the Gemara in Berachos (40a) states that because that Posuk, familiar to us from the second paragraph of Kerias Shema, first mentions food for animals then speaks of the person eating, one is forbidden to eat unless he has already given food to his animals. The Rambam (Hilchos Avadim 9:8) writes that the early sages indeed fed their animals before they themselves ate.

Rabbeinu Yehuda HaChassid, in his Sefer Chassidim (Siman 531), takes note of the fact that a different Posuk in this Parsha (Bereishit 24:46), as well as a Posuk later in the Torah, in which Hashem tells Moshe to bring water out of the rock for the people and their animals (Bamidbar 20:8), both indicate (as does the Posuk in this Parsha cited above) that the people themselves drank before any drinks were provided for their animals. He thus explains that when it comes to drinks, human beings are to be taken care of before animals, and only regarding food do we say that animals are to be fed first, as suggested by the aforementioned Posuk recited in Kerias Shema, as well as by other Pesukim in this Parsha (Bereishit 24:32-33) which state that when Lavan invited Avraham's servant in, he first fed the animals before feeding the servant himself, and by a third Posuk found earlier in the Torah (Bereishit 1:30).

The Magen Avraham (Orach Chaim 167:18) quotes this ruling from the Sefer Chassidim that human beings take precedence for drinking, and only tasting food is forbidden to a person until he gives something to his animals. The Machatzis HaShekel says that if the Torah bothered to present the details about Rivkah serving water to the servant and his camels, it must be to teach us that this is the proper practice. The Yad Ephraim, after quoting from the Ohr HaChaim in his commentary on the Torah (Bamidbar ibid) that in a situation of danger, even feeding a human takes precedence over feeding an animal, suggests a reason for this distinction between eating and drinking. Despite all this, however, the Kaf HaChaim (Os 50) quotes those who say that there is in fact no difference, and even for drinking, one's animal comes first.

There is, however, some question as to whether this prohibition to eat before feeding one's animals is actually a prohibition in the strict sense of the term, or more like a part of a chasidus, pious behavior, but the violation of which would not be an Aveirah. The aforementioned Rambam writes, as quoted above, only that the early sages used to feed their animals before they themselves ate, as if to suggest that to do this is a form of exemplary behavior, but is not strictly required. The Shulchan Aruch, moreover, does not explicitly record this obligation at all. The Magen Avraham cited above, however, does write explicitly that one may not eat before feeding one's animals, and he quotes a view elsewhere (Orach Chaim 271:12) that the prohibition is MideOraisa, from the Torah. The Mishnah Berurah, in his Biur Halacha (Orach Chaim 167 s.v. u'mikol makom), quotes this view as well, but he points out that the prohibition is from the Torah. Nevertheless, he does cite this prohibition in the Mishnah Berurah itself (s.k. 40), as do the Aruch Hashulchan (seif 13) and the Chayei Adam (Klal 45 seif 1), the latter implying that the prohibition is indeed from the Torah.

Rav Yaakov Emden (Shu"t She'eikas Ya'avetz vol. 1 siman 17) was asked whether this prohibition applies to one who has a cat or a dog in his home. He replied that although both cats and dogs do perform services for their owners, the former keeping away the mice and the latter protecting the home from burglars, and as such they deserve to be supported with food by their owners, he believes nevertheless that one doesn't have the same level of obligation to feed them as one does to feed domesticated farm animals. He explains that this is because they can easily find their own food anywhere and anytime, such as by foraging through the garbage, and they therefore are not as dependent on their owners for food. Cats and dogs, however, can roam around and find food whenever they want; the obligation to feed them is thus not as incumbent

on the owners as is the obligation to feed other animals. He concludes, however, that one who wishes to be scrupulous in his deeds should feed his cat and his dog as well before he himself eats. It would seem, by the way, that the more absolute requirement to feed one's animal first would apply if one keeps his cat or dog - or any other pet - confined to his house or yard, rendering it unable to obtain food on its own.

It is worth noting that Rav Yaakov Emden makes it clear, based on several sources, that one must give food to one's animals even on Shabbos, as already codified by the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 324:11), where, interestingly enough, dogs are mentioned specifically. He also notes that it appears from the Gemara in Gittin (62a) that even if one is not at home, one may not eat anywhere unless he has seen to it that his animals at home would be fed beforehand.

Because of this requirement to feed one's animals before partaking of food oneself, the Gemara in Berachos cited above indicates, as explained by Rashi (s.v. tol), that although it is generally prohibited to speak after reciting the Beracha of Hamotzi before eating some bread, and if one does, he must recite the Beracha again, if one speaks at that point about feeding one's animals, he need not recite another Beracha. Tosafos (s.v. haba) explains that the Halacha in general is that if one talks in between the recitation of any Beracha over a food or a drink and the actual eating or drinking, one must recite another Beracha unless the talking relates to the meal; apparently, speaking about feeding one's animals relates to the meal because of this requirement to feed the animal's first and thus does not constitute an improper interruption.

The Rambam (Hilchos Berachos 1:8) and the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 167:6) rule accordingly. Based on the above dispute about whether this rule applies to drinking, the Kaf HaChaim, among others, discusses whether an interruption to talk about giving the animals a drink would require one to recite a new Beracha.

It should be noted that in general, the Mishnah in Bava Kamma (69b) forbids one to own a dog, or, presumably, any other potentially dangerous pet, unless it can be safely chained; Rashi (s.v. es hakelev) explains that this is because a dog bites and barks and frightens people. The Rambam (Hilchos Nizkei Mammon 5:9) accepts this ruling, adding that some animals frequently cause a lot of damage, but the Shulchan Aruch (Choshen Mishpat 409:3) limits the prohibition to owning an "evil dog," a term which appears in the Gemara earlier in Bava Kamma (15b). In the aforementioned Teshuvah, Rav Yaakov Emden discourages owning dogs except for financial or security reasons, and views playing with them as a waste of time and as the behavior of non-Jews. In the Sefer Chassidim (siman 938), Rabbeinu Yehuda HaChassid writes that to raise birds is a waste of time, and that money spent on this should rather be given to the poor. The Aruch Hashulchan (seif 4), however, writes clearly, as do others, that one may own a dog (or another pet) unless it is the type which may cause harm or damage.

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**Weekly Parsha Blog:: Rabbi Berel Wein**

### Chayei Sarah

The entire cycle of human life is portrayed for us in this week's Torah reading. The first part of the parsha deals with the inevitable reality of human mortality. The Torah teaches us the concept of Jewish burial - its simplicity and honesty, and the restorative treatment of grief. Avraham mourns the loss of his life's companion and support. The Torah does not tell us what he said in detail but it does tell us that he did eulogize her, for eulogies are for the benefit of the living as much as they are for the honor and memory of the deceased beloved one. The Torah also records for us that Abraham wept at the loss he sustained. Weeping is not so much in style in our modern society. The funeral parlors in the Diaspora usually do all in their power to mask the reality of their business. Funerals are now called celebrations of life and other such phony euphemisms. In the medieval world death was real and a constant presence in life.

Anyone who has visited Prague as a tourist will have the tower clock struck by the Angel of Death every hour indelibly etched in his mind and memory. But a life spent dwelling on death is pretty much a wasted life. The Torah instructed us to choose life. So, all of Judaism is life-centered. The true celebration of life never takes place at a funeral. It takes place in the everyday activities of life, in purposeful endeavors and in the promotion of the inestimable value of life. Our current enemies celebrate death - suicide missions, hatred and murder. We have to continue to choose life, no matter what.

The bulk of the parsha deals with marriage and the process of finding the proper mate for life. Such a process is so complicated and fraught with significant possibilities of error and sadness. Therefore Judaism traditionally invoked Divine aid in seeking a mate in marriage.

And that it is what Eliezer, Avraham's servant and agent does in attempting to find the right wife for Yitzchak. But, he also tests her to see what her character truly is. How much compassion and kindness is within her persona and what type of wife would she make for the heir to Avraham's vision of monotheism and humanity – are the issues that Eliezer has to address in his search for a mate for Yitzchak.

If the beginning of the parsha deals with the proper and healthy attitude towards human mortality, the other part of the parsha deals with life, family and nation building. It teaches us that proper, moral, compassionate people are necessary for God's work to be accomplished in this world.

It also teaches that one must be willing to commit in order to build a successful marriage and an eternal family. Lack of such committed courage and fear of the unknown are the enemies of the continuity of the Jewish family and the survival of the Jewish people generally. This parsha has very important lessons to impart to us.

Shabbat shalom

#### **Who Knows Twelve?**

In the interests of transparency and honesty, let me state at the outset here that this brilliant essay is completely self-serving and personally motivated. But nevertheless it does, in my opinion, contain ideas and insights that may prove worthwhile to my long-suffering loyal readers. The name of my newly published book is "Who Knows Twelve – Insights and Values From the Book of Trei-Asar (The Twelve Prophets)."

The book is a culmination of research and ruminations that have gathered in my mind, living here in Jerusalem over the past few years. It became clear to me that a true appreciation of the words of prophecy of these great and holy men of Israel is much easier to achieve when living in the Land of Israel rather than when in an apparently gilded Diaspora environment.

The literal starkness of the words of these prophets is an every day experience here in Israel. Both the good and the better are omnipresent in Israeli life and in the events that befall our society here. A true student of Trei-Asar is not surprised or blindsided by the occurrences that are part of our existence here in the Holy Land. It has all been predicted and described for us in varying amounts of directness by the great prophets of Israel.

The clarity of vision and the insight that God has a master plan, so to speak, for the Jewish people and the world generally is one of the most basic and encouraging ideas that emanates from all of the twelve prophets of Trei-Asar, and that no matter what twists and turns humans take, it is His will that eventually will be done.

Some of the wondrous events that have occurred in Jewish society and especially here in the Land of Israel are the basic topics of the prophets of Trei-Asar. The ingathering of the exiles of the Jewish people was a long cherished hope of the Jewish people but for millennia it was only a forlorn and distant dream. There was no sense of reality present as how this immense migration would occur and how a small, then arid and desolate land would somehow be able to accommodate these incoming hordes.

But the prophets of Israel all said that it would somehow happen and be successful. And that is exactly what has occurred. There naturally have been many hiccups along this way. The maabarot of the 50's, the discrimination against different groups of immigrants, the dislocation and dysfunction that must accompany such a wrenching change of location and societal mores, all accompanied the realization of the dream of the ages and the fulfillment of the prophecy of the men of Trei-Asar.

Yet, in the big picture, which is how the prophets of Trei-Asar always saw the world, the ingathering of the exiles would occur. And so it has, albeit in a somewhat surprisingly quiet and almost unnoticed fashion. The prophets of Trei-Asar always dealt with strategy and not tactics, results and not with details.

One of the more unfortunate characteristics of current Jewish education is the complete neglect of the study of Trei-Asar. Somehow, this magnificent work has fallen between the cracks in the curriculum that exist in Jewish education.

There would be a better sense of current events and future hopes and plans if people knew and appreciated the ideas and insights of these prophets. There would be an understanding of the arc of Jewish history and of the momentous times that we now live in. We would be less bogged down in the pettiness and political smallness that is the daily grist of our media and news reporting.

We would be able to better identify the true moral issues that face us and react to them in a confident and positive fashion. The words of the prophets would inspire boldness and self-confidence, a belief in our cause and the righteousness of our beliefs. We would be less discouraged by the absence of easy solutions to our difficult existential threats and problems. In short, we would be a happier and more serene society, even in the face of hostility and hypocritical bigotry and discrimination.

The purpose of the prophets of Trei-Asar was to guide and counsel us, to inspire and strengthen us in our times of difficulty and challenge. But they cannot accomplish their mission if we are unaware of their words and presence amongst us. They are of no influence whatever if we do not study their works and share their visions. Who knows twelve? We should all answer, "I do!"

Shabbat shalom

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**Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Chayei Sara**

**For the week ending 7 November 2015 / 25 Heshvan 5776**

**by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonofthemoon.com**

#### **Insights**

##### ***The Source of the Soul***

***"And Sara died in Kiryat Arba — that is Chevron ..." (23:2)***

The eyes of the world focus on a small hill in the center of the city of Jerusalem.

It measures about one-eighth of a one square kilometer.

Lives are forfeited for its soil. Nowhere else in the entire world does such a tiny patch of land provoke so much strife and bloodshed.

Why?

Because this is the place where Heaven and Earth kiss.

This is the place from which G-d started His creation. This is the place where Avraham was prepared to sacrifice his son Yitzchak; the place where Yaakov saw the connection of Heaven to Earth in a ladder stretching skywards; the place where our two Holy Temples stood and where we believe the third and final one will be built at the proper time.

Even though the nations of the world may not understand all this, they instinctively sense its importance and uniqueness and they want it to control it for themselves.

In addition to this place, there is another place where this world also touches the world beyond, and it too is a site of contention and bloodshed.

It's called Chevron.

The word Chevron comes from the root meaning "to connect" — l'chaber. The souls of all who are buried there connect Above in the City of G-d known as "The Four Camps of the Divine Presence."

Not for naught is the desire of the righteous to be buried there, for from Chevron their souls merit to connect to their spiritual source.

That's the meaning of this verse, "Kiryat Arba — literally "the City of the Four (Camps of the Divine Presence)" — that is Chevron, the "connector" of the soul to its ultimate source.

Source: Rabbeinu Bachaye

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**Orthodox Union / www.ou.org**

**Britain's Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**

##### ***Faith in the Future***

He was 137 years old. He had been through two traumatic events involving the people most precious to him in the world. The first involved the son for whom he had waited for a lifetime, Isaac. He and Sarah had given up hope, yet God told them both that they would have a son together, and it would be he who would continue the covenant. The years passed. Sarah did not conceive. She had grown old, yet God still insisted they would have a child.

Eventually it came. There was rejoicing. Sarah said: "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." Then came the terrifying moment when God said to Abraham: "Take your son, your only one, the one you love," and offer him as a sacrifice. Abraham did not dissent, protest or delay. Father and son traveled together, and only at the last moment did the command come from heaven saying, "Stop". How does a father, let alone a son, survive a trauma like that?

Then came grief. Sarah, Abraham's beloved wife, died. She had been his constant companion, sharing the journey with him as they left behind all they knew, their land, their birthplace and their families. Twice she saved Abraham's life by pretending to be his sister.

What does a man of 137 do – the Torah calls him "old and advanced in years" – after such a trauma and such a bereavement? We would not be surprised to find that he spent the rest of his days in sadness and memory. He had done what God had asked of him. Yet he could hardly say that God's promises had been fulfilled. Seven times he had been promised the land of Canaan, yet when Sarah died he owned not one square-inch of it, not even a place in which to bury his wife. God had promised him many children, a great nation, many nations, as many as the grains of sand in the sea shore and the stars in the sky. Yet he had only one son of the covenant, Isaac, whom he had almost lost, and who was still unmarried at the age of thirty-seven. Abraham had every reason to sit and grieve.

Yet he did not. In one of the most extraordinary sequences of words in the Torah, his grief is described in a mere five Hebrew words: in English, “Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.” Then immediately we read, “And Abraham rose from his grief.” From then on, he engaged in a flurry of activity with two aims in mind: first to buy a plot of land in which to bury Sarah, second to find a wife for his son. Note that these correspond precisely to the two Divine blessings: of land and descendants. Abraham did not wait for God to act. He understood one of the profoundest truths of Judaism: that God is waiting for us to act.

How did Abraham overcome the trauma and the grief? How do you survive almost losing your child and actually losing your life-partner and still have the energy to keep going? What gave Abraham his resilience, his ability to survive, his spirit intact?

I learned the answer from the people who became my mentors in moral courage, namely the Holocaust survivors I had the privilege to know. How, I wondered, did they keep going, knowing what they knew, seeing what they saw? We know that the British and American soldiers who liberated the camps never forgot what they witnessed. According to Niall Fergusson’s new biography of Henry Kissinger, who entered the camps as an American soldier, the sight that met his eyes transformed his life. If this was true of those who merely saw Bergen-Belsen and the other camps, how almost infinitely more so, those who lived there and saw so many die there. Yet the survivors I knew had the most tenacious hold on life. I wanted to understand how they kept going. Eventually I discovered. Most of them did not talk about the past, even to their marriage partners, even to their children. Instead they set about creating a new life in a new land. They learned its language and customs. They found work. They built careers. They married and had children. Having lost their own families, the survivors became an extended family to one another. They looked forward, not back. First they built a future. Only then – sometimes forty or fifty years later – did they speak about the past. That was when they told their story, first to their families, then to the world. First you have to build a future. Only then can you mourn the past.

Two people in the Torah looked back, one explicitly, the other by implication. Noah, the most righteous man of his generation, ended his life by making wine and becoming drunk. The Torah does not say why but we can guess. He had lost an entire world. While he and his family were safe on board the ark, everyone else – all his contemporaries – had drowned. It is not hard to imagine this righteous man overwhelmed by grief as he replayed in his mind all that had happened, wondering whether he might have done something to save more lives or avert the catastrophe.

Lot’s wife, against the instruction of the angels, actually did look back as the cities of the plain disappeared under fire and brimstone and the anger of God. Immediately she was turned into a pillar of salt, the Torah’s graphic description of a woman so overwhelmed by shock and grief as to be unable to move on. It is the background of these two stories that helps us understand Abraham after the death of Sarah. He set the precedent: first build the future, and only then can you mourn the past. If you reverse the order, you will be held captive by the past. You will be unable to move on. You will become like Lot’s wife. Something of this deep truth drove the work of one of the most remarkable survivors of the Holocaust, the psychotherapist Viktor Frankl. Frankl lived through Auschwitz, dedicating himself to giving other prisoners the will to live. He tells the story in several books, most famously in *Man’s Search for Meaning*. He did this by finding for each of them a task that was calling to them, something they had not yet done but that only they could do. In effect, he gave them a future. This allowed them to survive the present and turn their minds away from the past.

Frankl lived his teachings. After the liberation of Auschwitz he built a school of psychotherapy called Logotherapy, based on the human search for meaning. It was almost an inversion of the work of Freud. Freudian psychoanalysis had encouraged people to think about their very early past. Frankl taught people to build a future, or more precisely, to hear the future calling to them. Like Abraham, Frankl lived a long and good life, gaining worldwide recognition and dying at the age of 92.

Abraham heard the future calling to him. Sarah had died. Isaac was unmarried. Abraham had neither land nor grandchildren. He did not cry out, in anger or

anguish, to God. Instead, he heard the still, small voice saying: The next step depends on you. You must create a future that I will fill with My spirit. That is how Abraham survived the shock and grief. God forbid that we experience any of this, but if we do, this is how to survive.

God enters our lives as a call from the future. It is as if we hear him beckoning to us from the far horizon of time, urging us to take a journey and undertake a task that, in ways we cannot fully understand, we were created for. That is the meaning of the word vocation, literally “a calling”, a mission, a task to which we are summoned.

We are not here by accident. We are here because God wanted us to be, and because there is a task we were meant to fulfill. Discovering what that is, is not easy, and often takes many years and false starts. But for each of us there is something God is calling on us to do, a future not yet made that awaits our making. It is future-orientation that defines Judaism as a faith, as I explain in the last chapter of my book, *Future Tense*.

So much of the anger, hatred and resentments of this world are brought about by people obsessed by the past and who, like Lot’s wife, are unable to move on. There is no good ending to this kind of story, only more tears and more tragedy. The way of Abraham in Chayei Sarah is different. First build the future. Only then can you mourn the past.

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

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**Orthodox Union / [www.ou.org](http://www.ou.org)**

**Rabbi Ari Kahn on Parsha**

***Man of Peace***

In many families, when a child reaches marriageable age, parents get involved. This may take the form of more or less subtle hints, comments or barbs, or, in some societies, active involvement in the process of selecting a mate.

When our second patriarch Yitzchak was “on the market” (the modern yeshivish idiom is “in the parashah”), his father Avraham summoned his most trusted aide and instructed him to set out on a journey to find an appropriate spouse for his son. Specifically, Avraham required that the woman be from his own hometown, from the land where Avraham was born.

What immediately strikes us as strange is Avraham’s caveat that Yitzchak himself must not cross the border of Canaan to travel to the place of Avraham’s birth. Yitzchak is to be left behind while the faithful servant finds him a spouse-by-proxy, as it were, an ancient version of a mail-order bride. Avraham’s insistence on this point is firm and unequivocal, yet no explanation for his chosen method of matchmaking is offered.

To fill in this void, we might surmise that Avraham’s method was a means of insuring continued possession of the land he had recently been granted as an inheritance. God had promised the land of Canaan to Avraham’s descendants, and had made it very clear that Yitzchak would be the sole heir. We should not forget that at that particular point in history, very few people had been made aware of this promise; perhaps Avraham was concerned that a break in the chain of possession would forfeit the inheritance. He did not want Yitzchak to leave the Land in which he had only recently begun to stake his legal, tangible, demonstrable claim. This conjecture is not without its own weaknesses, most notably the ease with which Yaakov, Yitzchak’s son and heir, is later sent on the very path Yitzchak is barred from taking.

Several years after Yitzchak’s betrothal, a famine hits the Land of Canaan. When Yitzchak considers migrating to Egypt in search of relief, as his father had done years earlier, God Himself instructs Yitzchak not to leave the Land. We might say, then, that Avraham intuited God’s objection; Avraham somehow knew that God had other plans for Yitzchak, and they did not include leaving the boundaries of the Promised Land. This may be related to Yitzchak’s personal history: The Akeida, in which Yitzchak was placed upon the altar as an offering to God, changed him forever. Yitzchak achieved a status of holiness

that was permanent; only the Holy Land was appropriate for a person of this unique spirituality. Yitzchak could not leave Eretz Yisrael. There may be another way to understand Yitzchak's unique attachment to the Land of Israel, an alternative approach that stems from Yitzchak's unique gifts, his unique personality. In general, Yitzchak is a bit of an enigma. We know far more about Avraham and Yaakov – and even Yishmael and Esav are painted in greater detail in the text. The dearth of information creates an aura of mystery, but the few hints we have may provide some insight into his personality. What do we know about Yitzchak as an individual, independent of his father? When Avraham's envoy returns from his mission with a bride for Yitzchak, the Torah tells us that Yitzchak, too, has been traveling. He returns from a trip to a place called Be'er l'Chai Roi, The Well of the Living Vision. This place is not new to us; we know that Hagar gave it its name after seeing a vision there. When Sarah passed away, Avraham made the continuity of his family and the transmission of the legacy he had built with Sarah his first priority. He became actively involved in finding a wife for his son Yitzchak. At the same time, rabbinic tradition reports, Yitzchak became concerned about his father's loneliness, and took up the task of rekindling the relationship between Hagar and Avraham (24:62, and Rashi's comments on the verse). This is only one of Yitzchak's conciliatory gestures enumerated in the text: When Avraham passed away, we are told that both his sons, Yitzchak and Yishmael, came together: And Yitzchak and Yishmael his sons buried him in the Cave of Machpelah in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which faces Mamre. (25:9) Both sons united, with Yishmael taking a deferent step back and allowing Yitzchak to take the primary role. From the very particular wording of this verse, our sages understood that "Yishmael had repented." No longer jealous of the younger brother who he once blamed for forcing him out of his inheritance, no longer wounded by the second-class treatment his mother had been subjected to, Yishmael now acknowledged Yitzchak as the primary son of Avraham's "real" wife. He was able to stand behind Yitzchak and honor their father's memory and wishes. How did this come about? It was most certainly to be credited to the gentle, conciliatory ways of Yitzchak, who was wise enough, secure enough, sensitive enough to validate not only Hagar's relationship with Avraham, but also the place where she was granted revelation. This was no mere "lip service," nor was it a ploy to make peace: After Avraham's passing, Yitzchak chooses to live in the area of Be'er l'Chai Ro'i. (25:11) With this insight into Yitzchak's personality, it should come as no surprise that he is uniquely capable of accepting and loving his troubled son Esav. While others might have rejected someone so superficial, so untamed and unyielding, Yitzchak had a knack for getting along with people, especially family members who might otherwise have been forever estranged. Yitzchak, who had loved and been loved throughout his life – by his own father, by his wife – was able to love others as they were, able to see the redeeming aspects of troubled personalities and love others on their own terms. Yitzchak was a conciliatory person, a man who brought peace to others because he was at peace with himself. This may have been the precise cause of Avraham's concern; the reason Avraham did not want Yitzchak to travel back to the hometown he himself had left behind. Had Yitzchak returned to Aram Naharaim, Avraham envisioned Yitzchak trying to heal the relationships, to mend the proverbial fences. Avraham apparently felt that his nascent nation was too new and vulnerable to undertake an outreach program; the time was not yet ripe to try to influence others. The local Canaanite idolaters were not a cause for concern; Yitzchak knew that they were a separate people. It was precisely with family members that Avraham felt there was cause for concern. Yitzchak, who knew how to keep his family together despite the challenges presented by Hagar, Yishmael and Esav, was not permitted to go back to the old country, a place of intolerance and enforced uniformity. In time, Yaakov's experiences in that same family environment proved Avraham's fears were not unfounded: Even Yaakov, who was far less conciliatory and who was far more adept at holding his own in the face of predators, had a very hard time extricating himself from the household of Betuel and Lavan. Yitzchak, whose life story is one of cooperation and inclusion, would surely have been lost in such a milieu – either subsumed into the larger

household of his extended family or thrown into the furnace from which his father Avraham had only narrowly escaped. For a more in-depth analysis see: <http://arikahn.blogspot.co.il/2015/11/essays-and-audio-chayei-sarah.html>

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<http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Columnists/>  
 Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites  
**The Jerusalem Post**

**By Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz**  
*Divine promise and human effort*  
**November 5, 2015 - Thursday 23 Heshvan 5776**

*Ten years later and the promise had still not been fulfilled.*  
 This week's Torah portion opens with the death of Sarah, Abraham's wife and the first matriarch of the Jewish nation. After Abraham expresses his pain and mourns for his wife, who had been with him for such a long journey and has now died, he faces a problem: He does not have a burial plot for her. Abraham's urgent mission during this difficult hour is to find a burial plot, so he turns to the local residents and asks them to buy the Cave of Machpela (the Cave of the Patriarchs) in Hebron. Finally, after a long and complicated negotiation, he purchases the cave and the field surrounding it, and he buries Sarah in it. From here on, the Cave of the Patriarchs would become Abraham's family's cemetery plot where Abraham would be buried alongside Sarah, and later Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah. Abraham's need to purchase the cave and the field surrounding it for its full price reminds us that it should not have been this way. Sixty-two years earlier, when Abraham embarked on a journey to the unknown following God's instructions and reached Canaan, which is the Land of Israel, he was promised the land in words that cannot be misunderstood: "And the Lord said to Abram... 'Please raise your eyes and see, from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward. For all the land that you see I will give to you and to your seed to eternity... Rise, walk in the land, to its length and to its breadth, for I will give it to you.'" (Genesis 13:14-17) A year goes by, and then another, and then another. Ten years later and the promise had still not been fulfilled. Twenty... 30... 60 years later and Abraham was still wandering the land without owning a piece of land legally. But he manages. He has a tent where he hosts guests, he raises his son Isaac, and then at this most difficult of moments, reality hits. Sarah dies and he has nowhere to bury her. What is Abraham going to do now? What would we do in this situation? The Torah does not mention Abraham's reaction to this complicated situation, but only notes his actions: He purchases the Cave of Machpela. Does this point to Abraham giving up on the promise that had been made to him by God to get the Land of Israel? The sages of the Talmud did not see Abraham's actions in this way when they quoted God's words to Moses: "I told Abraham: 'Rise, walk in the land, to its length and to its breadth, for I will give it to you.' He wanted a place in which to bury Sarah and did not find one, until he bought for 400 shekels and did not contemplate My midot [qualities]." (Talmud Bavli, Tractate Sanhedrin, 111) Indeed, Abraham did not contemplate God's qualities but continued to believe in His promise. So why did he purchase the Cave of Machpela rather than wait for God to arrange things for him? It seems that even in the difficult situation Abraham was in, he internalized the following concept: A Divine promise does not excuse man from investing his own efforts. True, the land was promised to me. Sixty-two years have passed and the promise has not yet been fulfilled. But all this does not negate my own role at this time to take steps to make the promise come true. This is an important message for each of us: God's promise does not mean we should stand around and wait. On the contrary, it calls upon us to make an effort, lean in, make things happen. The promise is needed in order to add to reality what we ourselves cannot contribute: its success. We can work hard and yet not succeed. It is the success – and not the effort – that is provided only by He who administers the world, the Creator of the Universe. And thus God tells us: Open for Me an opening the size of the eye of a needle and I will open for you an opening the size of a hall. You make the effort and I will help make it a success. The writer is rabbi of the Western Wall and holy sites.

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**Rav Kook List**

**Rav Kook on the Torah Portion**

***Chayei Sarah: The Burial of Sarah***

Curiously, the Torah dedicates more verses to describe the purchase of a burial plot for Sarah than all of the rest of her full life of 127 years. What is so significant about this acquisition? And why was the city of Hebron chosen for Sarah's burial?

**Jacob's House**

Isaiah prophesied that in the future era, "Many nations will come and say, 'Let us go up to the mountain of God, to the house of the God of Jacob'" (Isaiah 2:3).

Why will the nations be drawn specifically to the "God of Jacob," and not the God of Abraham or the God of Isaac? The Sages explained:

"Not like Abraham who saw it as a Mountain, nor like Isaac for whom it was a Field, but like Jacob, who called it a House." (Pesachim 88a)

What did the Sages mean by Mountain, Field, and House? On a simple level, they refer to pivotal events in the lives of the Avot. Abraham's greatest service of God was the test of the Akeidah that took place on the Mountain of Moriah. Isaac, we are told, would meditate in a Field (Gen. 24:63). And Jacob named the place of awe-inspiring holiness where he dreamed of angels and Divine promises, Beth-El - the House of God.

Yet these locations carry a deeper significance. Mountain, Field, and House are metaphors for different ways to serve God. The service of Abraham and Isaac was a universalistic service, accessible to all. It was like a mountain or an open field; all were welcome to join in. Abraham, the "father of many nations," sought to repair the sin of Adam and influence all of humanity. His life's goal was to publicize the name of God for all peoples. Isaac similarly sanctified the name of Heaven throughout the world.

Abraham and Isaac looked outwards, but Jacob focused inwards. In the metaphor of 'God's house,' Jacob limited the holiness of Israel to the framework of his family, his home of twelve sons. He built Beit Yisrael, the House of Israel. Unlike Abraham and Isaac, Jacob's children all remained within the Jewish people.

While Abraham and Isaac's influence was inclusive and universal, Jacob's service was exclusive to Israel. For this reason it is represented by the image of an enclosed house. Surrounded by protective walls, the special sanctity of Israel is safeguarded from negative external influences. "Israel shall dwell securely, alone" (Deut. 33:28).

**Separate Holiness**

Why must Israel be distanced from the other nations? This isolation prepares the Jewish people for their special mission, and enables them to demonstrate the proper path for the rest of the world. "The nations shall walk by your light" (Isaiah 60:3).

When the nations will aspire to connect to holiness, they will recognize that the sanctity of Israel is separate and distinct. They will say, "Let us go up to the house of Jacob." Let us go and emulate the distinct holiness of Jacob.

Like Jacob, Sarah recognized the need for this protected holiness. She was the one who demanded that Ishmael be sent away, to remove his negative influence on her son.

And Sarah initiated the process of separating and designating the Land of Israel to the Jewish people. This began with her burial in Hebron.

**Hebron, the Future Sanctity of Israel**

The very first Jewish acquisition of land in Eretz Yisrael was the purchase of the Machpeilah cave in Hebron. Through the burial of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs, Hebron became a symbol of the initial acquisition of the Land of Israel. We similarly find that, while Hebron was never the permanent capital of Israel, the reign of King David - an era of complete Jewish sovereignty over the Land of Israel - began in Hebron. Hebron signifies the future ownership and holiness of the Land of Israel.

When Abraham was commanded, "Rise, walk the land, through its length and breadth" (Gen. 13:17), where did he go? He immediately settled in Hebron. Hebron is the focal point of potential sanctity of the Land of Israel. Hebron is where future generations take possession of their inheritance and realize their destiny - by virtue of those buried in ancient times.

This concept of future sanctity found expression in the unusual system used to divide up the Land in the time of Joshua. According to one opinion (Baba Batra 117a), the Land of Israel was apportioned according to the Israelites who left Egypt, even though they had died in the desert and never made it to Israel. Usually it is the living who inherit the dead - i.e., the number of living descendants determines how an inheritance is divided. Here, though, it was the other way around: the dead determined how the living would inherit land. So, too, Sarah's burial - the very first Jewish burial in the Land of Israel - determined the future inheritance and sanctity of the Land. Sarah designated this land for her descendants. She separated Eretz Yisrael from the rest of the world, just as she separated her son from Ishmael. Sarah initiated the special heritage of the Land and the people of Israel.

(Adapted from Shemu'ot HaRe'iyah 9: Chayei Sarah, 5690/1929)

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<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/17829>

**Rabbi Nachman Kahana**

***Chayei Sarah: A call for Jewish pride***

**Thursday, November 05, 2015**

*Where is the Avraham of our generation who will stand up before the world and declare that Eretz Yisrael is our God-given heritage?*

Our rabbis have taught that Hashem put Avraham Aveinu (Abraham) through ten tests. The ninth was the "binding of Isaac" (akeidat Yitzchak) and the tenth, the negotiations between Avraham and Efron the Hittite for the purchase of Ma'arat Ha'machpela (The Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron) as a burial site for Sarah.

Logic dictates that each succeeding test increases in difficulty. The question arises: what was the focus of the final test set before Avraham which caused it to be more difficult than the Akeida.

Was it the necessity to deal with worldly matters of "real estate" while in the midst of a profound emotional crisis at the loss of his beloved Sarah? Perhaps! Was it his being taken advantage of by the unscrupulous Efron, who charged 400 shekels for a burial site which was worth not nearly that much? Perhaps!

These were indeed aggravating realities, but the real hard core of the test, I believe, ran far deeper into the area which was to impact upon Jewish history.

A fundamental religious principle appears in many of our classical commentaries and responsa:

**מעשה אבות סימן לבנים**

The actions of the fathers (Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov) guide their children (the Jewish people) - along the path to redemption.

The moment of truth came when Avraham, despite the dangerous ramifications of what he was presently going to do, stood up before the Hittite council of elders and proclaimed:

**גר ותושב אנכי עמכם**

I am a stranger and a resident among you.

Rashi quotes the Midrash that explains what Avraham meant:

**'אם תרצו הריני גר ואם לאו אהיה תושב ואטלנה מן הדין שאמר לי הקב"ה 'לורעך אתן את הארץ הזאת**

If you wish [to sell the burial site], I will act as a stranger who recognizes your right of ownership over the area; but if you do not [sell me the burial site], I will implement my right of sovereignty and seize the land by virtue of God's promise to me, "And to your children will I give this land."

Avraham was told by Hashem to leave his land, his birthplace and his father's home to take up residence in a land which Hashem would identify later.

At that time, Europe was desolate, as were most parts of Africa and Asia, not to mention the Americas. But instead of sending Avraham to establish a Jewish State in an unpopulated area where there would be no protest, Avraham was directed to the most populous area in the world. A thin sliver of land at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea populated by 7 pagan nations numbering in the hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions!

Each of these peoples descended from Cham, son of Noah, and arrived in the land much before Avraham. They cultivated its fields, constructed buildings and established places of worship, which taken together served as a common civilization.

At this juncture in their history, a stranger arrives from the east and declares that he is the true sovereign over all the land. Not just the area of Canaan; but of all the lands from the Euphrates in the north to the Nile in the south, and from the Mediterranean in the west to Mesopotamia in the east.

By this statement, Avraham challenged the rights of countless peoples who considered themselves the owners of these lands by virtue of conquest and possession. This was an act of



immense courage, because from that moment on Avraham was perceived by all of those people as a threat to their way of life, to their very existence.

We were here before you! You are a foreign implant in the Middle East. We do not tolerate other beliefs! Does this sound strangely familiar? Don't we hear it daily from Arab spokesmen, echoing the feelings of the ancient children of Cham when reacting to Avraham's declaration of sovereignty? These anti-God, latter-day advocates of denial spew their venom in the media, on campuses, in the Security Council, on Capitol Hill and on the Temple Mount.

And we ask ourselves: where is the Avraham of our generation who will stand up before the world and declare that Eretz Yisrael is our God-given heritage?

This is obviously too huge a test for today's Jewish leaders; whether they be great talmidei chachamin, who, almost to the man, advocate a low profile when dealing with Yishmael in the east and Eisav in the west, and certainly the secular Jews who believe that our ties to the land are historic and do not stem from God's promise to our forefathers.

Were I to merit the opportunity to stand before an international forum, I would shout the words of Avraham Aveinu. That although we recognize certain individual rights of non-Jews in the Holy Land, God and His people Israel are the sovereigns over the entire land between the two great rivers.

The rejection of our sovereignty over Eretz Yisrael as God-given is the root cause of all our problems today in Eretz Yisrael.

In wake of the 1967 Six Day War, when Hashem presented to Am Yisrael the entire area of Eretz Yisrael west of the Jordan river on a silver platter, the Jewish thing to do would have been to immediately:

-Erase the Moslem entities from the Temple Mount. Annex all the areas of Shomron, Yehuda, Aza, and the Golan Heights into the State of Israel. Open the bridges over the Jordan River to Jordan and help, facilitate, assist, inspire all the Arabs to leave the country.

- Commence on an ambitious project of resettling the newly acquired lands between the Ocean and the River.

- Open ever wider the gates of Aliya for the millions who would have returned had the government acted according to the first four.

However, since our leaders lack the Jewish pride which filled Avraham Aveinu, we are witnessing the negation of everything which is correct.

The Temple Mount has become the focal point for Moslems in Eretz Yisrael, when on a Friday in Ramadan 300,000 Moslems ascend the Mount and turn their backs on Yerushalayim and face Mecca.

Official government policy is to plan together with the United States the establishment of one more Arab state in the area of Shomron, Yehuda and Aza.

Instead of diminishing the Arab population, our government does all to increase it, as they turn a blind eye to the multiple Arab marriages, so that a Bedouin family can number from 50 to 75 and more children, and thus slowly take over the entire Negev.

The government creates multiple hardships for people wishing to settle in the liberated areas.

The long-awaited in-gathering of all Jews to Eretz Yisrael has not yet materialized, because of the weakness of the "children" compared to the pride and strength of Avraham Aveinu, when he declared our God-given sovereignty over every millimeter of this Holy Land.

Fortunately, as in past desperate periods in our history, Hashem sent a leader who exhibited the Jewish pride exemplified by Avraham Aveinu.

It will happen again in our time. And when that day comes, Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran and all the other would-be Hitlers who slither around the planet, will be no more. And the banners of the twelve Jewish tribes will be raised by the people who have returned to take possession of all of Eretz Yisrael.

#### ***Yitzchak Never Left Eretz Yisrael***

In the parasha, Avraham instructs Eliezer to travel to Ur Kasdim, Avraham's birthplace, to find an appropriate wife for Yitzchak (Isaac).

Avraham warns Eliezer that at any event, Yitzchak was not to leave Eretz Yisrael even for a short period of time. And in fact Yitzchak never left Eretz Yisrael.

A true story.

Two years ago, I was in the bet midrash of Kol Yehuda in the Old City. Four Israeli men from the city of Atlit in the north entered. We began discussing the unique qualities of Yerushalayim (Jerusalem) and the sanctity of Eretz Yisrael.

At one point I told them the following not knowing, at the time why, but it soon became clear.

I told them that the Holy Land has four names:

Eretz Yisrael - the Land of Israel ארץ ישראל

Eretz Tzvi - the beautiful Land ארץ צבי

Eretz Chemda - the desired Land ארץ חמדה

Eretz HaKodesh - the sacred Land ארץ הקודש

Then I told them that the first letters of the four words Yisrael, Tzvi, Chemda and Kodesh ( י צ ך א ק )

make up the name Yitzchak - and Yitzchak never left the Land.

They were very impressed by this, and after shaking hands left the bet midrash.

A few moments later, one of the men returned and sat near me. He said: "I am in a relationship with a Jewish woman from America, and we are discussing marriage. But her condition for this union is that we live in New York."

However, in the light of what you just told us about Eretz Yisrael and Yitzchak never leaving, I am breaking off our relationship, and my name is YITZCHAK.

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#### **The Daily Hodu Prayer**

**By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff**

*In commemoration of the thanks recited by Eliezer, we will study:*

#### **Hodu -- Our Daily Thanks**

**Question #1:** "Why does *Nusach Ashkenaz* recite *Baruch She'amar* before *Hodu*, whereas *Nusach Sfarad* recites *Hodu* first?"

**Question #2:** "I noticed that there are sections of *Tehillim* that are very similar to *Hodu*. Why are there noticeable differences between these parts of *Tehillim* and *Hodu*?"

**Question #3:** "The *Hodu* that is in the book of *Tehillim* is divided between two chapters, Chapters 105 and 96. Why do we combine them when we *daven*?"

**Answer:**

The beautiful praise to *Hashem* that begins with the words *Hodu lashem ki tov*, which we recite as part of the daily morning prayers, is a quote from the *Divrei Hayamim* book of *Tanach*, with a concluding selection of other verses. *Nusach Ashkenaz* recites *Hodu* immediately after *Baruch She'amar*, as the first part of *Pesukei Dezimra*, the Biblical praises of *Hashem* that we recite every morning, whereas *Nusach Sfarad* recites it **prior** to *Baruch She'amar*. I will explain, shortly, the basis for these differing customs, why we recite *Hodu* daily and the historical context within which it was originally written. This will provide both an education and inspiration about our history, our prayers and our customs, in addition to answering all the above questions.

#### **Historical Background**

Allow me to first trace the background of the events that led to the writing of *Hodu*. Let us return, in history, to the first prophecy of the prophet Shmuel, who is still a child, and is being raised and educated by Eli Hakohein. Eli was already quite advanced in years, and he had handed over the running of the Mishkan, then in Shiloh, to his two sons, who had, unfortunately, abused the authority granted them. Eli admonished them for their wrongdoing, but they ignored his rebuke (*Shmuel I* 2:22-25).

One fateful night, while the lad Shmuel was asleep, *Hashem* appeared to him, telling him that a major catastrophe would befall the Jewish People, one that would include the destruction of Eli's sons. The following morning, Eli, who knew that Shmuel had received Divine communication during the night, insisted that Shmuel tell him all the gruesome details of the prophecy. When Eli heard the prediction, he responded, *He is Hashem. He will do what is good in His Eyes* (*Shmuel I* 3:18), thereby accepting *Hashem's* judgment.

A short time later, the Jews went to war against the *Pelishtim* (the Philistines). The first day's battle went very badly for the Jews, and included the loss of about four thousand slain on the battlefield.

The elders of the Jews then decided to get the *aron* from Shiloh and bring it into battle with them, to save them from their enemies (*Shmuel I* 4:3-4). When the *aron* arrived in the Jewish camp, they sounded a great shofar blast. The *Pelishtim* discovered that the *aron* was now in the Jews' camp, and they were petrified, knowing what *Hashem* had done to the Egyptians many years before (*Shmuel I* 4:5-9).

#### **The Aron is captured!**

However, the next day's battle was catastrophic for the Jews. Over thirty thousand fell, including Eli's sons, and the *aron* was captured by the *Pelishtim* (*Shmuel I* 4:11-12).

The *Pelishtim* took the captured *aron* to Ashdod, then a *Pelishiti* city, to the temple that housed their main deity, Dagon, and placed the *aron* alongside their idol. The first morning, they discovered the statue of Dagon fallen over, which they proceeded to upright. The second morning, Dagon's statue had fallen again, but this time it was badly damaged. In addition, the residents of Ashdod and its suburbs had become plagued with a serious and extremely painful medical condition. The Ashdodians refused to continue harboring the *aron*, requesting direction from the leaders of the *Pelishtim* as to what to do with it. The *Pelishiti* leaders decided to move the *aron* to their main city of Gath.

However, upon the arrival of the *aron* in Gath, the people there were struck with the same health problem that had previously plagued Ashdod. Subsequently, the *Pelishtim* decided to move the *aron* to a third *Pelishiti* city, Ekron, but the Ekronites refused to allow it to enter their town. The



*Pelishtim* then decided that the *aron* was too dangerous to hold onto, and that they would therefore return it to the Jews. In the interim, while the *Pelishtim* prepared an appropriate gift to *Hashem* to accompany the return of the *aron*, they kept it in a field that was outside any city, so that its presence would not harm anyone. The *Pelishtim* then prepared a gold offering to placate *Hashem* for having taken His *aron* and for having treated it disrespectfully. They then loaded the *aron* onto a wagon pulled by two cows and sent it on its way, apparently unaccompanied by any individual. The cows proceeded with their precious cargo towards the city of Beit Shemesh, a Jewish town (*Shmuel I* 5:1-6:12).

Unfortunately, the people of Beit Shemesh, also, did not treat the *aron* with adequate respect and, as a result, many of them died. The Jews then moved the *aron* to Kiryas Ye'arim, to the house of a man named Avinadav, where it was treated with proper respect. The *aron* remained in Avinadav's house for twenty years (*Shmuel I* 6:19-7:2).

#### The *aron* is moved

Twenty years later, and much has transpired. Shmuel has gone to his eternal reward. Shaul has become king, lost his right to the monarchy, and fallen in battle. David is now king of Israel. He plans a gala celebration to move the *aron* from its current location in Avinadav's house to Yerushalayim. David consults with all the leaders of the Jewish people and gathers 30,000 select men from the length and breadth of the country to participate in the festivities.

However, the event is marred. At one point during the transportation of the *aron*, it appeared to be slipping from its place, and Uzza, the son of Avinadav, grabbed the *aron* to prevent it from falling (*Shmuel II* 6:1-7; *Divrei Hayamim I* 13). However, this was *halachically* and philosophically a gross error, since the *aron* does not require being carried – on the contrary, the *aron* carries those who carry it (*Rashi, Shmuel II* 6:7). Uzza died as a result.

David cancelled his plans to move the *aron* to Yerushalayim that day, and instead, he diverted it, temporarily, to the house of a Levi named Oveid Edom. During the three months that the *aron* remained in Oveid Edom's house, his household received much blessing, thus demonstrating that *Hashem* was not angry at David or the Jewish people. Thus, David decided that the time was now right to move the *aron* to Yerushalayim, as he had originally planned. Amidst much dancing and jubilation, the *aron* was transported to Yerushalayim (*Shmuel II* 6:12-19).

As part of this celebration, David arranged for Asaf, the Levi, and his brothers to sing a unique, ecstatic song of thanks to *Hashem*, specially written by David in honor of the joyous occasion (*Divrei Hayamim I* 16:7). (This same Asaf is the author of numerous psalms of praise to *Hashem*, see *Tehillim* 50 and 74-83.) The song that David wrote for this special occasion (*Divrei Hayamim I* 16:8-36) begins with the words *Hodu lashem ki tov*, and it forms the foundation of the prayer that we recite every morning. We will shortly analyze the thrust of this beautiful prayer.

#### Why Daily?

Why do we recite this song every day?

Among the beautiful and ancient *Midrashic* literature that *Klal Yisroel* possesses is the early, revered work *Seder Olam*, which the *Gemara* (*Yevamos* 82b) attributes to none other than the esteemed *Tanna* Rabbi Yosi ben Chalafta, one of the greatest disciples of Rabbi Akiva. In an era that included outstanding *Tannaim* – Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai, the author of the *Zohar*, Rabbi Meir *baal ha'nes*, the prolific Rabbi Yehudah (ben Illa'ei), who was honored to always speak first ahead of the other great scholars of his generation (*Shabbos* 33b et al.), and Rabbah Shimon ben Gamliel, the head of the Sanhedrin – Rabbi Yosi's halachic opinion is preeminent, even at times when he is in the minority (*Eruvin* 46b). As the *Gemara* states, *Halacha kerabbi Akiva meichaveiro, ukerabbi Yosi meichaveirav*, the *halacha* is according to Rabbi Akiva when he disagrees with any other individual scholar, and according to Rabbi Yosi even when he disagrees with more than one scholar (*Eruvin* 46b).

The *Seder Olam* (Chapter 14) records that, for 43 years, from the time that the *aron* was moved to Yerushalayim until the *Beis Hamikdash* was built by *Shlomoh Hamelech*, the first fifteen verses of the song *Hodu* were performed to accompany the offering of the daily *Tamid* every morning, and the next fourteen verses accompanied the afternoon *Tamid*. Based on this *Seder Olam*, it became common practice to recite this song of praise, *Hodu*, every morning to commemorate this ancient practice (*Orchos Chayim*, quoted by *Beis Yosef, Orach Chayim*, Chapter 50; *Tur, Orach Chayim* Chapter 51).

#### Before *Baruch She'amar* or after?

At this point, we can address the first question that was asked above:

“Why does *Nusach Ashkenaz* recite *Baruch She'amar* before *Hodu*, whereas *Nusach Sfarad* recites *Hodu* first?”

The *Orchos Chayim* already notes that in his day, there were two customs, one of reciting *Hodu* before *Baruch She'amar* and the other approach of reciting it after. Even a terse reading of *Hodu* certainly explains why one would include it in the *Pesukei Dezimra*, since it is a beautiful praise of *Hashem*. But why recite it before *Baruch She'amar*?

#### *Korbanos*

To explain this practice, I need to present a small introduction. The part of davening immediately before *Baruch She'amar* is called *korbanos*. It includes recital of the Torah verses that illustrate some of the daily procedures in the *Mishkan/Beis Hamikdash*, the chapter of Mishnayos

beginning with the words *Eizehu Mekomam*, which categorize and explain the different types of *korbanos* offered, and then concludes with the teaching beginning with the words *Rabbi Yishmael omer*. One of the reasons why we recite these Torah verses and Mishnah towards the beginning of our daily davening is so that we can fulfill the verse *Uneshalmah parim sefaseinu, our lips should replace the bulls* (*Hoshea* 14:3), which, in this context means that our prayers should be adequate substitutes for the offerings. (Bulls are mentioned specifically, since they are the most expensive offerings [*Ibn Ezra* ad loc.]) This is true even more so today, when we cannot offer *korbanos* as long as the *Beis Hamikdash* remains in ruin, and therefore the closest we can come to offering *korbanos* is to recite the passages about them.

We can now explain why *Nusach Sfarad* recites the *Hodu* prayer before *Baruch She'amar*. Its position there acts as a climax to the recital of the *korbanos*. Although we are unable to sing *shirah* to accompany the *korban Tamid*, we can nevertheless praise *Hashem* with the same words that were recited then. Thus, this prayer is a sequel to *korbanos* and should be recited prior to *Baruch She'amar*.

#### *Korbanos* or *Pesukei Dezimra*?

On the other hand, *Nusach Ashkenaz* recites the *Hodu* as part of our *Pesukei Dezimra*, the part of our daily prayer, whose title literally translates as *Verses of Song*. The same great scholar mentioned above, Rabbi Yosi, declared his yearning to receive the extraordinary reward granted to those who recite the *Pesukei Dezimra* daily (*Shabbos* 118b).

#### Similarity to *Tehillim*

At this point, we can explain the second question that I raised above:

“I noticed that there are sections of *Tehillim* that are very similar to *Hodu*. Why are there noticeable differences between these parts of *Tehillim* and *Hodu*?”

The passages of *Hodu* are from *Divrei Hayamim* — and they are very similar to passages in *Tehillim*. The first part of *Hodu*, that which was sung to accompany the morning *Tamid*, is almost identical to the first fifteen verses of *Tehillim* Chapter 105. The second part of *Hodu*, which was sung to accompany the afternoon *Tamid*, bears much similarity to the 96<sup>th</sup> Chapter of *Tehillim*. Why would David have written two versions of these passages that are so similar, yet with some minor changes between them?

#### How are these verses different?

Let us begin by noting the differences that exist between the otherwise identical first fifteen verses of *Hodu* and the first fifteen verses of *Tehillim* Chapter 105.

There are several very minor changes between the two passages that do not affect the translation in any significant way. Therefore, whichever David wrote first (we have no way of knowing whether he wrote these parts of *Divrei Hayamim* first or these chapters of *Tehillim*), when he wrote the second passage, he decided to modify it slightly, and there could be any number of reasons why he chose to do so. For example, he uses a different form for the Hebrew equivalent of the word *his mouth*. Whereas *Divrei Hayamim* uses the poetic and less common *pihu*, *Tehillim* uses the more common *piv*. Another seemingly insignificant change is whether *Yitzchak's* name is spelled with the letter *tzadi*, as it usually is (as it is in *Tehillim* 105), or in the irregular way with the letter *sin* (*Yischak*), as *Divrei Hayamim* spells it.

#### *Avraham* or *Yisrael*?

Three of the differences between *Divrei Hayamim* and *Tehillim* are relatively significant: The *Divrei Hayamim* version calls upon *zera Yisrael, avdo bnei Yaakov bechirav -- the offspring of Yisrael, his servant, the children of Yaakov his chosen ones --* to sing the joyous hymn, whereas *Tehillim* says, *zera Avraham, avdo, bnei Yaakov bechirav, the offspring of Avraham, his servant, the children of Yaakov his chosen ones*, mentioning the children of Avraham in the first part of the verse rather than those of Yisrael.

A second, even more significant dissimilarity occurs two verses later, where *Divrei Hayamim* commands the Jews: *zichru le'olam beriso, remember His covenant forever*, whereas *Tehillim* says *zachar le'olam beriso, He* [that is, *Hashem*] *remembered His covenant forever*. Thus, in *Tehillim* both the subject and tense of the verb are shifted, which now transforms this *pasuk* from being a **commandment to the Jewish people** to observe their covenant with *Hashem*, as it is in *Divrei Hayamim*, into a **praise of Hashem** for keeping His end of the bargain.

A third, less significant, change occurs four verses later when *Divrei Hayamim* states that *Hashem* promised the Land of Canaan to the Jewish people, *bihyosechem mesei mispar, when you were but few in number*, which in *Tehillim* appears as *bihyosam mesei mispar, when they were but few in number*, speaking not to the Jews, but about them.

The explanation for these variations appears to lie in the differences in the roles that *David Hamelech* intended these fifteen *pesukim* to play in the two, respective places. *Tehillim* Chapter 105 consists of 45 verses, and therefore, the first 15, which are so similar to the *Hodu* of *Divrei Hayamim*, are really an introduction or first section of a longer whole. The entirety of that Chapter of *Tehillim* is to articulate the praises to *Hashem* for fulfilling all that He promised to *Avraham Avinu*. The main thought of this praise is that we are to recognize what *Hashem* has done for us. All of world history was planned and arranged by Him for the purpose of creating the Jewish nation. Its emphasis is thanks to *Hashem* for what He has already done. We therefore praise *Hashem* that **He remembered His covenant forever**. It is also appropriate to

refer to the Jews in third person, *when they were but few in number*. And, since the entire Psalm praises *Hashem* for fulfilling all that He promised to *Avraham Avinu*, it is appropriate to describe the Jewish people as *zera Avraham, avdo, the offspring of Avraham*. However, when we use these same fifteen verses as an introduction to the rest of *Hodu*, they function as an **exhortation to praise Hashem** for making the Jews unique among all the nations of the world. Once we understand this point, then the changes made by David, himself, in the two passages become self-explanatory. *Divrei Hayamim* **commands** the Jews: **zichru le'olam beriso, remember His covenant forever**. (See the essay by Rav Moshe Eisemann, included on page 431 of the *Artscroll Divrei Hayamim*.) Similarly, *Divrei Hayamim* is talking to the Jews, and it is therefore appropriate to say **bihyosechem mesei mispar, when you were but few in number**. And, certainly, we understand why, when Jews are praising *Hashem* for making us unique among the nations, we emphasize *zera Yisrael, the offspring of Yisrael, his servant* – since we are not the exclusive offspring of Avraham.

#### **Conclusion**

At this point, we can address the third question that I raised above: “When *Hodu* is quoted in *Tehillim*, it is divided between two different chapters, Chapters 105 and 96. Why do we combine them when we *daven*?”

Although the content of *Hodu* strongly overlaps with the content of those two chapters of *Tehillim*, there is a difference in emphasis between the role of the chapters of *Tehillim* and the praise of *Divrei Hayamim*. Here, in our prayer we use the version of the *Hodu* as it was used when transporting the *aron*, and when the *shira* was sung to accompany the daily *korban tamid* prior to the building of the *Beis Hamikdash*.

Rav Hirsch, in his Commentary on the *Siddur* notes that *Hodu* was the *shira* sung when the *aron* was in “*galus*” – when it was located in a temporary place. Thus, *Hodu* was added to our prayers as praise to *Hashem* when we are in *galus*. This is so that we remember that we are required to prove our legitimate right as bearers of *Hashem*'s Name, and that we continue to declare His works and sovereignty – specifically, when it is not popular for us to do so in our current environment.