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## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON CHAYEI SARA - 5785

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Rav Frand - A Rare Biblical Hespel for a Rare Biblical Personality  
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Parshas Chayei Sarah A Rare Biblical Hespel for a Rare Biblical  
Personality print

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi  
Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly  
portion: #1312 – Lying About Someone's Age When It Comes To  
Shidduchim. Good Shabbos!

It says in the beginning of Parshas Chayei Sarah, "Sarah died in  
Kiryat-Arba which is Hebron in the land of Canaan; and Avraham  
came to eulogize Sarah and to bewail her." (Bereshis 23:2). The sefer  
Me'orei Ohr makes an interesting observation. In the entire Torah,  
there are only two hespedim (eulogies): One for Sora Imeinu and one  
for Yaakov Avinu. When Miriam died, a hesped is not mentioned.  
Likewise, when Aharon Hakohen died, the Torah says that "the  
entire House of Israel cried" but there is no mention of a hesped.  
Similarly, the Torah does not mention hespedim for Avraham or  
Yitzchak when they died. And again, although it says that the "House  
of Israel cried" for Moshe, there is no mention of a hesped.

Apparently, it was not such a common practice in Biblical times that  
hespedim were made when a person passed away. What then was so  
special about Sora that Avraham formally eulogized her?

A famous Gemara in Sanhedrin discusses whether hespedim are  
primarily for the honor of the living or for the honor of those who  
have departed. Clearly, in a hesped we speak of the fine attributes of  
the deceased – but why do we do that? Is it to honor the dead or  
perhaps it is because when people hear the hespedim, they become  
inspired to live more meritorious lives themselves? As Shlomo says,

"It is preferable to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of  
feasting." (Koheles 7:2).

At funerals, we hear things about people that we don't necessarily  
know about them. Invariably, when I walk out of a funeral after  
hearing the hespedim, I think to myself "You know, I never knew  
that about this person." The purpose of hesped is to inform the  
audience who this deceased person was. Chazal say that the hesped  
that Avraham said for Sora was the chapter "A woman of valor who  
can find?" (Mishlei 31:10-31). That was the hesped, because if there  
was one defining attribute of Sora, it was that "Behold, she is in the  
tent." (Bereshis 18:26). She was extremely tzanua (private).  
Therefore, we can assume that people really did not know much  
about Sora. It was not until her hesped that Avraham Avinu let the  
world know who she was.

The author of Me'orei Ohr cites an incident involving Rav Yeruchem  
Levovitz. He was once in a shtetel and he heard that an old woman  
who lived by herself passed away. He was told that there probably  
would not be a minyan at her levaya. Even though Rav Yeruchem  
didn't know the woman, he figured that this was somewhat akin to a  
mes mitzvah (because no one would be at her funeral). Therefore,  
even though he didn't know her, the great Mirer Mashgiach went to  
this lady's levaya. To everyone's surprise, there was a large  
gathering of people there. It turned out to be a tremendous levaya and  
even people from other cities came.

Initially, people could not figure out why so many people came. It  
eventually emerged that unbeknownst to almost anyone, this woman  
did acts of chessed for dozens and dozens of people. Everyone,  
however, thought that "I am the only one for whom she does this."  
So everyone said "She was so good to us, she would take care of us,  
she would give us money and give us food... so I need to go to her  
levaya." Rav Yeruchem Levovitz – the great Mashgiach – did not  
want to let this event pass without sharing the mussar message within  
it to his yeshiva talmidim (students) in the Mir.

He returned to the yeshiva and told them: It is the way of people to  
not hide things from the public that are not valuable. A person's  
everyday silverware and dishes are never hidden away in a closet  
under lock and key. However, the fine china is stored behind the  
breakfront. The crystal gets hidden away even further and the gold is  
kept in the vault. We don't want anyone to see that.

We hide the things that are most dear and precious to us. The most  
precious things to this woman were the things she did for other  
people. As a result of that, she hid them, like people hide gold and  
silver. This is what Rav Yeruchem learned from that story of the old  
woman in the shtetel.

That is why Avraham Avinu felt the necessity to eulogize Sora.  
Everybody knew Avraham. "You are a prince of Elokim in our  
midst..." (Bereshis 23:6). Yitzchak was also well known. When  
Yosef died "he was the ruler throughout the Land of Egypt." Aharon  
and Moshe's greatness were known throughout the "entire House of  
Israel." Who needed to, and in fact, who would be able to say  
hespedim, on such great and well-known individuals?

However, Sora Imeinu's greatness, because of her incredible tznius  
and privacy, was not as well known. Therefore, Avraham Avinu had  
to let the world know who she really was.

As far as the fact that Yaakov Avinu was also eulogized, the Me'orei  
Ohr explains that this was because Yaakov Avinu led a troubled life.  
He had to run away from his brother who wanted to kill him. He had  
to put up with a cheating father-in-law for twenty-plus years. He had

the aggravation of the apparent loss of his beloved son, Yosef. Everyone looked at Yaakov Avinu and thought “Nebach, a troubled life.” That is why, this author suggests, there was also a necessity to eulogize Yaakov.

I think that perhaps there may be another reason why they said a hesped for Yaakov. The pasuk says “They came to Goren Ha’atad...” (Bereshis 50:10) The Gemara says that all the kings of Canaan took their crowns and put them on the coffin of Yaakov Avinu. Who was the hesped for? In that case, the hesped was for the benefit of the nations of the world. The “Jews” there were just Yaakov’s family, who already knew who he was. The purpose was so that everyone else should know who he was. In either event, there was a special necessity for saying a hesped in Yaakov’s case.

But the bottom line is that hespedim are needed when there is a special reason to let the world at large know who this person was. With Avraham, Yitzchak, Moshe, Aharon, and Dovid, there was not such a need. It was the same with the other Matriarchs. But the world needed to know about Sora: “A woman of valor who can find?” because of her exceptional attribute of tzniyus / privacy.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem [DavidATwersky@gmail.com](mailto:DavidATwersky@gmail.com) Technical Assistance by David Hoffman; Baltimore, MD [dhoffman@torah.org](mailto:dhoffman@torah.org) This week’s write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand’s Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A listing of the halachic portions for Parshas Chayei Sora is provided below: Looking into a Shidduch – How Important is Family? (2022) – Breaking A Shidduch / Engagement 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. Rav Frand © 2023 by Torah.org, support Do you have a question or comment? Feel free to contact us on our website. 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> to get your own free copy of this mailing or subscribe to the series of your choice. 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. 2833 Smith Ave., Suite 225 Baltimore, MD 21209 <http://www.torah.org/learn@torah.org> (410) 602-1350

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**Rabbi Mordechai Willig –**

**Changed Names and Roles: Avraham, Sarah and Yehoshua**

Rabbi Mordechai Willig Changed Names and Roles: Avraham, Sarah and Yehoshua I

"Hashem Who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth... you will take a wife for my son there" (Bereishis 24:7).

Rashi renders my father's house, from Charan. In fact, Eliezer went to Aram Naharayim, to the city of Nachor (24:10). The Ramban (11:28) identifies the city as Charan, where Nachor, Avraham's brother, lived, and where Terach lived and died (11:31,32).

Rashi renders "the land of my birth", from Ur Kasdim. The Ramban disagrees and posits that Avraham was born in Aram, where he and his ancestors dwelled.

"Your name shall no longer be called Avram. Your name shall be Avraham, for I have made you the father of abundant nations (av hamon goyim)" (Bereishis 17:5). Rashi explains that Avram is a contraction of Av Aram, Avram was the spiritual father of the land of Aram where he lived and, according to the Ramban, he was born. The letter reish (ר) did not move from its place, even though now he is the father of the whole world. The Sifsei Chachamim explains that the contraction of av hamon is Avham, but the reish remained so it would not complain to Hashem. This refers to the continuation of Rashi: For even the letter Yud (י) of Sarai complained to Hashem when it was removed from her name ["Do not call her name Sarai, for Sarah is her name (17:15)"], until He added it to the name of

Yehoshua, as it says (Bamidbar 13:16) "Moshe called Hoshea bin Nun Yehoshua."

II

When Avraham became the father of the whole world, Aram feared that his new position as a universal leader would destroy his special, particular relationship with his original homeland. Thus, had his new name been Avham, the reish, symbolizing Aram would have complained. Therefore, his new name was Avraham implying a dual role. His new responsibility as the father of the whole world would not detract from his primary role as the father of Aram.

Avram and Sarai took men and women, respectively in Charan, a city in Aram, and converted them from idolatry to monotheism (Rashi 12:5). When their names changed to Avraham and Sarah they continued their special connection to the people of Aram who accompanied them to Eretz Yisroel.

Years later, Avraham's particular responsibility shifted to a much closer, personal, and significant one. [The converts drifted away, presumably because they served Hashem only based on the rational persuasion of Avraham, and not on pure faith in Him (Darash Moshe, Bamidbar 25:1; Shefa Chaim, Torah U'Mo'adim p. 213)]. Avraham became the progenitor of Am Yisroel. His main preoccupation for which Hashem loved him, was commanding his descendants to keep the way of Hashem, doing charity and justice (18:19, see Rashi). According to Chazal, Avraham kept the entire Torah before it was given (Kiddushin 82a), as it is said (26:5), "because Avraham obeyed My voice, and observed My safeguards, My commandments, My decrees and My laws." The Ramban adds, based on Bereishis Raba (95:3) that he taught Torah to his children. It was passed to Yitzchak, Yaakov, Yosef and beyond.

The reish of Avram which originally referred to Aram, now applies to Am Yisrael in general and to one's community and family in particular. As descendants of Avraham, the father of the whole world we still have universal responsibilities. As Avraham was the av hamon goyim, we are to be or lagoyim, a light unto the nations (Yeshaya 42:6), so that Hashem's salvation will extend throughout the world. (49:6).

However, our primary responsibility is to Am Yisroel, even at the expense of universalism. As Avraham remained av Aram, we must focus on our own communities. As he was mostly concerned with his own children and family, we must devote ourselves the most to ours. Notwithstanding communal obligations, one must prioritize commitment and connection to one's spouse, children and their spouses, grandchildren, siblings and the greater family.

III

Similarly, the yud of Sarai complained. Sarai, as the possessive yud denotes, means my leader. As Avram converted the men of Charan, she converted the women. As Rashi (17:15) explains, Sarai means my leader, for me but not for others. Sarah means she is the leader over all (Sarah al hakol), the equivalent of av hamon goyim. The yud complained fearing the loss of the special relationship Sarah had with Aram.

Hashem allayed the fear by moving the yud of Sarai to Yehoshua, as Moshe added it to Hoshea bin Nun. What does this mean?

Rashi (Bamidbar 13:16) teaches that Moshe prayed for him "May Hashem save you from the plot of the spies." What was their plot and how would the yud save Yehoshua?

"We were like grasshoppers in our eyes and so were we in their [the inhabitants of Eretz Yisrael] eyes" (13:33). The Be'er Yosef

Interprets "grasshoppers" based on the Rashi (Bava Kamma 116b s.v. tz'latzal). A grasshopper is a thief that consumes the produce of the landowner.

The spies viewed themselves like thieves coming to steal the land from the rightful inhabitants. "The fourth generation will return here (Rashi, Bereishis 46:12), for the sin of the Amorites will not be full until then"(Bereishis 15:16). Rashi explains that the four generations began from Yaakov, who went down to Mitzrayim. Calev, son of Chetzron (Sotah 11b), son of Peretz, son of Yehuda (Bereishis 46:12) (from whom the count began see Sifsei Chachamim) was among those who came to Eretz Yisroel.

The spies thought that the sins were not yet complete. Yehoshua and Calev argued "the decent ones among them have died, do not fear them" (Bamidbar 14:9, see Rashi). The time has come for the fulfillment of Hashem's promise to Avraham that his descendants will be given Eretz Yisroel (Bereishis 12:7).

Sadly, the spies ignored them and viewed themselves as thieves. Not surprisingly, the inhabitants agreed. Rashi (Bereishis 1:1) records that the nations of the world will say to Am Yisrael "you are thieves." We will respond "the whole earth belongs to Hashem. He created it. He took Eretz Yisrael from them and gave it to us." Am Yisrael should not have a guilty conscience, feeling that the land rightfully belongs to others (Nachalas Yaakov, see Saperstein edition foot note 5).

The possessive yud of Sarai was attached to Yehoshua to save him from the universalism of the spies who denied their particular right to Eretz Yisrael and viewed themselves as thieves. This parallels the Raish of Avraham which denotes the particular connection to Aram, and later to his family, notwithstanding his new role as the father of the whole world.

Sadly, the sin of the spies, unchecked universalism, has plagued our nation repeatedly. Workers of the world unite! Socialism and communism. And now anti-Zionism which views Jews as "occupiers" in our own land (See Chet Hameraglim: Then and Now). If we consider ourselves thieves, the nations will certainly concur, as happened to the "grasshopper" spies of old.

#### IV

This week, the Yeshiva world lost a unique masmid, rebbe, and rav, my close cousin Harav Yehoshua HaLevi Kalish zt"l. From early youth, his soul thirsted for Torah. After attending and graduating H.I.L.I. in Far Rockaway and RJJ on the Lower East Side, he learned in the Philadelphia Yeshiva. His parents, my beloved uncle and aunt, objected strenuously. They wanted him to learn by day and attend college at night, like his older brother, and most b'nei Torah in 1963. He responded that he is willing to forgo the comforts associated with a college degree for the sake of Torah.

After a brief stint in Mir Yerushalayim, he learned in Lakewood for many years. Like Avraham Avinu he retained his special relationship with his birthplace, and returned to the Far Rockaway/ Lawrence community with his wife, appropriately named Sarah, who shared his willingness to sacrifice for Torah, and children.

He taught in Yeshiva of Far Rockaway for nearly fifty years and subsequently founded a halacha kollel. He served as the rav of Beis Medrash of Harborview for nearly thirty years, and together with his rebbetzin, developed an unusual mutual love and admiration with their mispalelim.

But what made him unique was his extraordinary devotion to learning and reviewing Shas. After teaching daf yomi in Lawrence

before it was popular, which he continued to the end, he embarked on a regimen of seven blatt a day, completing all of Shas annually. In sum, he finished Shas more than forty times!

His public roles and prodigious hasmada spread his name and fame throughout the Yeshiva world. His universal dimension included the interests of his American youth: tennis, skiing, Scrabble, and his beloved accordion among others. He used them all to advance Torah and enhance tefilah in his yeshiva, his shul, and in Camp Heller, and abruptly abandoned an interest in baseball when it interfered with his primary, particular focus.

The yud in Yehoshua, taken from the possessive of Sarai, was most apparent in his connection to his prized talmidim and beloved balebatim. To their greater family, Hagaon Harav Yehoshua and Sarah insisted on being called (Uncle) Josh and (Aunt) Beaty. His super-tight relationship with his children and their spouses and children, was exceeded only by the exemplary closeness, and mutual devotion, to his eishes chayil.

In his final year, he published Penei Levana, compared (Bava Basra 85a) to Penei Yehoshua, his ancestor and namesake. It contains a comment on every single daf of Shas! Sadly, his life was cut short by illness, but in his last few weeks he expressed how happy and fortunate he is to have lived a full life, from youth to old age, toiling in Torah. His lifelong good name (shem tov) reflected his constant service of Hashem. His soul ascends on high, accompanied by every daf that he learned, reviewed, and wrote about, He will merit continuing his lifelong song of Torah in the next world. Indeed, Harav Yehoshua HaLevi was and will be happy and fortunate in both worlds.

I conclude this brief tribute with three ashreis, meaning both happy and fortunate, excerpted from his beloved Shas:

ברכות זי. ( - ) אשרי מי שגדל בתורה ועמלו בתורה ועושה נחת רוח ליוצרו, וגדל בשם טוב ונפטר בשם טוב מן העולם בבא בתרא י: ( - ) כי הא דיוסף בריה דר' יהושע חלש, אינגיד. א"ל אבוה: מאי חזית? א"ל: עולם הפוך ראיתי, עליונים למטה ותחתונים למעלה. א"ל: עולם ברור ראית. ואנן (פרש"י בעלי תורה) היכי חזיתנין? [א"ל: כי היכי דחשבינן הכא חשבינן התם (פרש"י חשובים ונכבדים) ושמעתי שהיו אומרים: אשרי מי שבא לכאן ותלמודו בידו.

פי' מהרש"א, " יש לפרש כי עיקר הלימוד ושנעשה בו רושם הוא הלימוד הבא מכתבת יד אשר על כן נקראו החכמים סופרים."

סנהדרין צא: ( - ) אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי: מניין לתחיית המתים מן התורה - שנאמר אשרי יושבי ביתך עוד יהללוך סלה, יהללוך לא נאמר אלא יהללוך - מכאן לתחיית המתים מן התורה. ואמר רבי יהושע בן לוי: כל האומר שירה בעולם הזה - זוכה ואומרה לעולם הבא, שנאמר אשרי יושבי ביתך עוד יהללוך סלה.

פי' מהרש"א, שירה שבעוה"ז לא הוזכר בקרא דאשרי יושבי ביתך, דקאמר קרא דיהללוך היינו לעוה"ב, כדקאמר ריב"ל גופיה מכאן לתחה"מ מן התורה. אלא ממלת עוד דריש ליה, דלשון עוד נופל בדבר הנוסף על הראשון, דהיינו בשירה שהללוך כבר בעוה"ז עוד יהללוך לעוה"ב.

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**The Mysterious Personality of Lot**

**By Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss –**

20 Heshvan 5785 – November 21, 2024 0

Photo Credit: Jewish Press One of the more enigmatic personalities in the Torah is Lot, Avraham's nephew and Sarah's brother. On the one hand we know that all the while that Lot was together with Avraham, the Shechina didn't speak with Avraham. We also know that Lot made the very poor decision of choosing to live in the very sinful environment of Sodom and Amorah, a decision that would cost him his wife and most of his family. On the other hand, he was the ancestor, through his daughter, of David HaMelech and the eventual Melech HaMoshiach.

I'd like to suggest what was so special about Lot that he merited to be an ancestor of royalty. In one of the most perplexing actions cited in the Torah, when the mad rabble descended upon Lot's home and demanded that he deliver to them his forbidden guests, Lot did something truly mystifying. He made them a counter proposal. "Hinei na li shtei vanos asher lo yadu ish. Otzi'ah na es'hen aleichem, va'asu lahen katov bei'ei'neichem. Rak la'anashim ha'eil al ta'asu davar, ki al kein ba'u b'tzeil korasi, I have two daughters who are pure. Take them instead and do with them whatever you want. Just leave these guests alone since they came under the protection of my roof." What father, when approached by a crazed gang, offers his daughters to save some visiting strangers? The Ramban writes that this shows ro'ah lei'vav, a cruelty of heart on behalf of Lot. He maintains that, while most parents would give their own lives for their daughters, Lot was willing to throw them to the mob to save some strangers.

I would like to suggest a different understanding of Lot's perplexing behavior. The angels had revealed themselves to Lot and told him that they had come to destroy Sodom. Rav Miller, z"l, zy"a, used to say that there were three million people in the five cities of Sodom. Lot embarked on a desperate mission to try to save these millions of people. Rashi reveals she'kol halaila haya meileitz aleihem tovos, the whole night Lot was interceding on behalf of the people of Sodom with favorable information. When the mob wanted to molest the guests, Lot knew that if they actually succeeded in attacking them, it would have been curtains for three million people. Instead, he asked his daughters if they would be willing to sacrifice themselves as a last-ditch attempt to save three million others. The daughters agreed and thus became worthy to be the ancestresses of royalty. This is not farfetched, as Lot indeed succeeded where Avraham failed. While Avraham was not able to save any of Sodom (except for Lot and his family), Lot saved one full city, the city of Tzoar. The name Lot has always troubled me. What does it stand for? It sounds similar to the word layit, which means to curse. That certainly is not the thrust of the name. However, Lot read backwards is tal, and it means to protect, like the Targum says, b'tzeil korasi, in the protection of my house, and the Targum renders b'tzeil as bitlal, a cloak of protection. Indeed, Lot tried to be a protector of Sodom. The Gemara tells us that if one should encounter the pillar of salt which Lot's wife turned into, he should make two blessings: Baruch Dayan HaEmes, Blessed is the true Judge [Who punished Lot's wife], and Baruch Zocheir tzaddikim, Blessed is He who remembers the righteous. The common understanding is that the righteous refers to Avraham Avinu, in whose merit Lot was saved. I would like to suggest that it is in the plural, tzaddikim, because it also refers to Lot and his daughters who valiantly tried to save Sodom and in the end succeeded in saving the city of Tzoar. "Kol hamatzil nefesh achas

miYisrael ki'ilu matzel malei, Whoever saves one soul in Israel it is as if he saved the entire world," and Lot saved (at least for two years) the entire city of Tzoar.

Finally, I'd like to suggest that Lot was saved in the merit of yet another tzaddik, and that was his father Haran. Remember, after Nimrod threw Avraham in to the kivshan ha'eish, the fiery furnace, Nimrod then asked Haran if he would bow down to the idol or go into the furnace, and Haran chose to enter the furnace. Although Haran died because he only did it after seeing Avraham come out successfully, he still died al kiddush Hashem, sanctifying G-d's name. I'd like to suggest that since Haran honored Hashem by going into the fire, his sacrifice saved his son Lot and his family from the fires and sulfur of Sodom.

In the merit of judging Lot favorably, may Hashem bless us with long life, good health, and everything wonderful.

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**What Comes First: Love or Marriage?**

**Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: The Morning, Dusk, and Night of Judaism**

By: Rabbi YY Jacobson

Isaac and Rebecca

The first marital ceremony described in the Torah is the one between Isaac and Rebecca, in this week's portion, Chayei Sarah. It is also the first time the Torah depicts the love between a man and a woman: "And Isaac took Rebecca, she became his wife, and he loved her." [1]

In the beginning of Genesis, after creating the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, G-d says: [2] "Therefore man should leave his father and mother and cleave (v'davak) to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." Yet this implies primarily a physical relationship, as the verse concludes, "they shall become one flesh." Love, on the other hand, is an intense emotional bond. It is mentioned for the first time not by Adam and Eve, not by Abraham and Sarah, but by Isaac and Rebecca.

Of course, Abraham and Sarah enjoyed a profoundly loving relationship. Married for many decades without children, they trailblazed together a new trail in history. They heeded the voice of G-d to leave behind their families and chart a new path to change the world. Sarah risked her life twice for Abraham when she maintained she was his sister, not his wife. Abraham refused to cohabit with her maid Hagar, but after she insisted that he does, "Abraham heeded the voice of Sarai." [3] Abraham listened to Sarah's advice

to expel Ishmael from their home, even when he personally disagreed.[4] After Sarah's death, one senses the depth of Abraham's grief and his intricate negotiations to grant his wife her final honor by burying her in the cave where he too would one day be interred.

Yet the Torah's first usage of the term love between spouses is reserved for Isaac and Rebecca: "And Isaac took Rebecca, she became his wife, and he loved her." [5]

What is unique about their marriage? And why is this sort of description never repeated in the Torah?

Jacob loves Rachel, the Torah tells us.[6] But that's before he married her: "And Jacob Loved Rachel, and he said [to her father]: "I will work for you for seven years for your youngest daughter Rachel." With Jacob and Rachel, the love precedes the marriage. With Isaac and Rebecca, the love follows the marriage. Why the difference?

No Friction

What is more, with our other patriarchs and matriarchs we observe moments of tension (of course relative to their lofty and sacred stature). Sarah tells Abraham, "I am angry at you." [7] Rachel too complains to Jacob about her childlessness; "and Jacob became angry at Rachel, saying, 'Am I in the place of G-d?'" [8]

In contrast, between Isaac and Rebecca, no friction is ever recorded.

This was not because they never disagreed. To the contrary, the Torah states, that Rebecca loved Jacob, while Isaac loved Esau. While Isaac wishes to bless Esau, Rebecca instructs Jacob to dress up like his brother and obtain the blessings for himself.[9] That could have easily resulted in a quarrel—but it did not.

Dawn and Darkness

The sages in the Talmud present a fascinating tradition about the three daily prayers in Judaism.[10] Abraham instituted the morning prayer, shacharis; Isaac instituted the afternoon prayer—mincha; and Jacob initiated the evening prayer, maariv.[11]

The Talmud derives this from the biblical verses. But what is the thematic connection between our three forefathers and these particular prayers? And why do we have three daily prayers? (Mohammed instituted five daily prayers for Muslims, mimicking our Yom Kippur model; yet on a daily basis we have three.)

Morning brings with it a fresh and exhilarating energy. As a new day emerges, we have this sense (at least till we check our phone) that new possibilities are beaming upon us. As the first rays of light cast their glow on our horizon, a new dawn also triggers our imagination. Morning brings with it new frontiers to conquer and fresh glimmers of hope.[12] One of the great spiritual masters, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812) writes, that when a person awakes, he or she feels instinctively a sense of happiness and promise.[13] Dawn is when G-d presses the restart button.

This is the story of Abraham. He embodied the morning of Judaism, bringing the dawn of a new era to earth. He opened humanity to a new reality, a new vision of earth. He heralded a novel message. The world is not a hopeless jungle; it is a Divine palace. We are not an insignificant speck of dust on the surface of infinity; we matter. Humanity is not a helpless folk subjected to the whims of competing gods, but part of a single narrative, united in the image of a moral and loving Creator. Abraham taught that there was purpose in history and meaning in life.

Who was Abraham? "Abraham woke up early in the morning to the place where he stood previously," the Torah states.[14] Then again, when he is instructed to bring his son to Mt. Moriah, "Abraham woke up in the morning." The Torah rarely presents the details of daily life, unless they convey an important theme. Following a long and dark night, Abraham ushers in the morning for civilization.[15] Abraham instituted the morning (shacharis) prayer, topping into the unique spiritual energy of daybreak, when you stretch out your arms and embrace a new day.

Jacob, in contrast, embodies the night of Judaism. The kingdom of night is full of mystique, solitude, darkness, drama, and romance. Jacob's life is riddled with darkness, uncertainty, loneliness, and struggle, fraught with drama and mystery. Already emerging from the womb he struggles with his

twin brother; later he wrestles with a mysterious adversary, and in the process he receives a new name, Israel, which means struggling with G-d. In the words of the prophet Isaiah:[16] "Why do you say, O Jacob, why declare, O Israel, 'My way is hidden from the Lord, my cause is ignored by my G-d'?"

No personality in the Torah is so connected with night as Jacob. In the middle of the night, the Torah relates, "Jacob remained alone, and a man fought with him till dawn broke." [17] Jacob tells his father-in-law Laban: "Twenty years I have been with you... scorching heat ravaged me by day, and frost by night; sleep eluded my eyes." [18] Jacob, says the Torah, "came upon a certain place and stopped there for the night, for the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of that place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place." [19] He then dreams of a "ladder standing on the ground, but its top reaches heaven." [20]

Jacob taught the Jewish people and the world how to encounter the Divine during the turbulence and obscurity of night. "And Jacob woke up from his sleep and he said, 'Indeed! G-d is present in this space, even if I did not know it.'" [21] Jacob feels the presence of G-d even in a space of darkness and adversity, even if his brain can't always figure out how. Jacob created the evening prayer—the connection to G-d amidst the mystery and drama of nightfall. As the sun set again and yet again in his life, he traveled internally to discover the source of light from within.

The Monotony of Afternoons

How about the vibe of the afternoon? Smack in the middle of a long and arduous day, lacking the freshness of the morning and the mystery of night, afternoons are often characterized by monotony. The day in the office is dragging on, and I am drained. If I am lucky enough to be a house mom or dad, the afternoon comes with its own stress: The children are returning from school, dinner is not made, the house is a mess, and I am tired; it's been a long day.

What is the energy that beacons to us during those dull afternoons? What is the spiritual heartbeat of the flat hours in the day, when I'm just waiting to go home?

It is the story of Isaac.

Isaac's life was—superficially speaking—not as colorful as his father's or son's life. Unlike his father Abraham he did not wage and win wars, nor did he did not travel extensively and change the vocabulary of humanity.[22] He was never a world celebrity, titled by the Hittites as "a prince of G-d." [23] He was not a founder of a new religion, or the progenitor of a new nation. He was not the "revolutionary" that his father was.

Nor did his life contain the drama of his son Jacob. Isaac did not flee his brother's wrath; he did not fight in the middle of the night; he did not fall in love with Rachel, and then experience deceit; he did not lose his son to a wild animal only to discover 22 years later that his beloved child became the Prime Minister of the superpower of the time. He did not relocate his entire family to a new country at an old ripe age.

Isaac lived in one location, and he never left it. His was more of a simple life. The only thing the Torah tells us about his vocation is that he grew grain and dug many a well.[24] Isaac represents the long [25] and seemingly tedious "afternoon" of Jewish history.

Therein lies his singular uniqueness.

Isaac's life might seemingly lack the grandeur, excitement, challenge, and mystique of Abraham and Jacob, yet he embodies the essence and foundation of Judaism: The daily consistent and unwavering commitment to G-d and His work. Abraham was a revolutionary; he cast a new light on the world, but it was Isaac who created the vessels to contain and internalize the light. Isaac dug the wells of Judaism: he went deeply into himself and the world around him and revealed the subterranean living wellsprings of faith and commitment, ensuring that the flow never ceases. Isaac's relative silence in the book of Genesis ought not to be confused with passivity; it was rather a silence that comes with internalization. Isaac knew that revolutions can last for a few decades, but if you do not create solid containers for the energy (represented by the wells in the ground) the energy will fade away.

Isaac at one point of his life lay on an altar, ready to become an offering for G-d. This became the hallmark of his life: He embodied absolute dedication and resilience, consistent, unwavering, and unbending.

Isaac is the founder of the afternoon prayer, the "mincha" of Judaism. "And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at dusk," the Torah states in this week's portion.[26] Isaac tapped into the spiritual energy of the "afternoons", showing us that a relationship with G-d does not consist only of the spontaneous exuberant morning inspiration, or of the drama and romance of the night. A relationship with G-d is expressed even more profoundly in the daily commitment and sacrifices we make for truth, love, goodness, and holiness. He bequeathed us with the internal resilience and strength to bring G-d into the dull and tedious journeys of life.

It is afternoon in your office. You need to respond to dozens of emails, catch the bank, return many a call, and still field a few annoying appointments. But you stand up to daven "mincha," to connect with G-d. You are busy, stressed, and tired; yet you leave everything behind, and you take time out and try to break out of the routine to focus on truth, on G-d, on eternity. Here is where the power of Isaac lay, the still voice of dedication that never falters.[27]

A Tale of Three Marriages

Marriage, too, has three components: the morning, the night—and the period of afternoon and dusk.

When we meet our soulmate, a new dawn overwhelms our heart's horizon. We are overtaken by the newness and freshness of the experience. We are excited, inspired, full of hope of what our joined future might look like. This is the "Abraham" of marriage, the morning—shacharis—of a relationship. Marriage also has those special moments of moonlight mystery and drama. The passion and electricity that comes from the unknown, from discovering the untold layers of depth in our spouse's soul; the special awareness that is born from dealing with struggle and uncertainty. This is the "Jacob" element of marriage, the evening—"maariv"—of a relationship.

But then there is the "mincha" of marriage—the simple, unromantic, non-dramatic, commitment of two people to each other, during the boring and flat days of life. Two souls holding hands together through the vicissitudes of life, in difficult times, in serene times, in monotonous moments, and in thrilling moments. It is the loyalty and trust built over years of supporting each other, day by day, hour by hour, in buying tomatoes, taking the kid to the doctor, and fixing the leak in the basement.

This creates a unique type of love. There is the love born out of thrill, drama, and exhilaration. This is the love that precedes marriage. You fall in love with your new partner, you are swept off your feet by the sunrise in your life. But there is another type of love that is born out of the daily commitment and dedication to each other. This love can never be experienced before marriage, only afterward.

This was Isaac's love. It's the "mincha" love, the one that comes from an ongoing, consistent bond in the daily grind of life. It is why the Torah states: "And Isaac took Rebecca, she became his wife, and he loved her." First Isaac marries her, and only then does he come to love her.

A Tale of Two Loves

What is the difference between the two loves?

In the first love, born out of the ecstasy of a new passionate relationship, the shorter we are married, the more the love; the longer we are married, the more difficult to love. As the thrill wanes, boredom sets in, and we sometimes grow disinterested. In the latter Isaac-type love, it is the reverse: the longer we are married, the deeper we grow in love. We don't fall in love; we climb in love. The love becomes like a deep well, discovered in the depths of the earth, and its life-sustaining waters never cease to flow.

This is not a "boring" marriage. Rather, its intensity is profound and enduring, because it is contained and integrated into the fabric of daily life, and into the experiences of two human beings confronting the full spectrum of our emotions and circumstances.

The first marriage described in Torah is the one of Isaac and Rebecca, in order to teach us one of the most important principles in marriage: Passion and romance are awesome, and we can all use a nice dose of them, but as our

circumstances change, they can fade away. A marriage must be built on good judgment, sound reason, an appreciation of the inner, enduring qualities and values of the other person, and it must possess the enduring commitment of a couple to each other, day-in, day-out, in a bond of steadfast, and simple faithfulness and trust. It is the capacity to hold your boundaries while connecting to the other person as a mature adult.

This is the reason Jewish law insists on no physical relations before marriage. This ensures that the couple decides to get married not based on physical attraction alone, because this may change with time, but with an appreciation of the character traits, inner personality, and values of the other person, for these will not change. Often, when men or women get physically involved, they become intoxicated by the pleasure and their blind spots cause them to overlook crucial information that might come to the surface a few years down the line and sadly sever the connection.

Our culture knows, perhaps, how to pray "shacharis" and "maariv." We desperately need to discover the enduring secret of "mincha."

Footnotes [1] Genesis 24:67 [2] Ibid. 2:24 [3] Genesis 16:2 [4] Genesis chapter 21 [5] Genesis 24:67 [6] Ibid. 29:18 [7] Ibid. 16:5 [8] Ibid. 30:2 [9] Ibid. 25:28, and chapter 27. [10] Berachot 26b [11] See Talmud ibid. Rabbi Yossi son of Rabbi Chanina said: The prayers were instituted by the Patriarchs. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: The prayers were instituted to replace the daily sacrifices... It has been taught in accordance with Rabbi Yossi ben Chanina: Avraham instituted the morning prayer, as it says, "Avraham got up early in the morning to the place where he had stood." Yitzchak instituted the afternoon prayer, as it says, "Yitzchak went out to meditate in the field at dusk." Yaakov instituted the evening prayer, as it says, "He encountered [vayifga] the place," and "pegiah" means prayer. Rabbi Yitzchak Zaler, in his commentary Minchas Yitzchak to the Talmud ibid. adds a nice hint in their names: The second letter of our three forefathers are: אברהם (צ', אברהם (ב' יצחק) (ב' יעקב) (ע' יעקב) (ע' יעקב). These correspond to the time of day at which each one instituted a different prayer. [12] See Beis Yosef Orach Chaim Chapter 4: A man upon awakening in the morning is like a new creature, as it is written: "The souls are new every morning." (Lamentations 3:23). Cf. Torah Or Lech Lecha Maamar Magen Avraham. Likkutei Torah Behaaloscha Maamar Miksha. [13] Maamarei Admur Hazaken Haktzarim p. 553. [14] Genesis 19: 27 [15] See Ethics of the Fathers ch. 5 [16] 40:27 [17] Genesis 32:24 [18] Ibid. 31:38;40 [19] Gen 28:11 [20] Ibid. 12 [21] Genesis 28:16 [22] See Rambam Laws of Avodah Zarah chapter 1. Rashi Genesis 24:7. Introduction of Meiri to Pirkei Avos. [23] Genesis 23:6 [24] Genesis chapter 26 [25] He also lives longer than his father and child: 180, not 175 or 147. [26] Ibid. 24:63 [27] See Talmud Berachos 6b: One should always be careful to pray the Mincha prayer for Elijah was only answered (when he prayed for a fire to come down and consume his sacrifice) during the Mincha prayer. Rabbi Moshe ibn Machir, in Seder Hayom, Page 32, explains: The prayer of Mincha deserves to be answered because it is a time when everyone is busy in their work and carried away with their doings and needs. Hence, when during such a time one instead runs after the needs of G-d and prays and beseeches before the Master of the world—thus recognizing his Master's greatness, while seeing himself only as a dedicated servant devoted to His service—it is appropriate to recognize this humble man who is careful with the word of G-d whom it is fit to look at him.

## Morals and Meanings in Chayei Sarah Inbox

**Rav Immanuel Bernstein** <ravbernstein@journeysintorah.com>

Thu, Nov 21, 7:14 AM (17 hours ago) to Chaim

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Chayei Sarah Nisayon

A central theme throughout the life of Avraham is that of nisayon — tests or trials. The Mishnah in Pirkei Avos[1] tells us that Avraham was subjected to ten trials and passed them all. The Mishnah does not specify what the trials were, and this is the subject of some discussion among the commentators. A very interesting question is: which was the final test? Although many are of the opinion that it was the binding of Yitzchak, Rabbeinu Yonah[2] maintains that that was in fact the penultimate test. The final test, he says, was the burial of Sarah.

This position is somewhat difficult to understand. We assume that the tests got progressively more difficult as they went along, for it

seems unreasonable that Avraham would be tested with something easier after already having accomplished something harder. Are we to understand, then, that the burial of Sarah was harder than the binding of Yitzchak? Without taking anything away from the difficulty which must have accompanied burying Sarah, surely they were surpassed by the notion of Avraham having to slaughter his son with his own hands!

Addressing this question will lead us to a fundamental discussion as to what may constitute a difficult test.

Often, when one is in an especially difficult situation, it is possible that the difficulty itself can serve to help the person get through it; there can be a sense of rising to the occasion. This does not take anything away from the decision to act correctly, but there may be a feeling of “if I will ever do the right thing, it will be at a time like this” which buoys the person and gives him strength and courage. Epic situations often speak to – and bring out – the epic in us.

By contrast, when faced with what is essentially a non-event, there is no sense of occasion, no drama, no external adrenaline or historic choice to be made. There is only the person himself and the right thing to do. Looked at in this way, there is something about a small act specifically which can make it a greater test, and which can better serve to define the moral level of the person.

A Half Penny for your Thoughts In a similar vein, the Gemara[3] discusses the verse which describes Iyov as being “a God-fearing man,”[4] and explains that his stature may be demonstrated by a certain business practice which he had. The smallest coin in the vernacular of the Gemara is a prutah. In any situation where the value of a commodity included a fraction of a prutah, Iyov would be sure to round it off in the favor of the one with whom he was doing business. If he was purchasing, he would round the price up to the next prutah; and if he was selling, he would round it down. This was done in order to ensure that he did not take even a fraction of a prutah which did not belong to him, even though such an amount is typically waived by the other party.

Why is this the most telling way to illustrate the God-fearing nature of Iyov? This business practice was hardly likely to put him too much out of pocket; even a hundred such transactions a year would still amount to only fifty pennies! Many people would be prepared to part with that amount in the interest of avoiding taking money illegally.

The answer is as per the above. When there is discrepancy of half a prutah, an amount so small there isn't even a coin for it, the true person will be seen. Even someone who would be prepared to forgo a large amount of money that he is not entitled to may find himself routinely rounding off the half prutah in his own favor. After all, it seems like such a “small” question. There is a certain aspect of a person's God-fearing nature which may only come out in a “half-prutah situation.” Where there is no “event,” there you will find the person.[5]

With this in mind, we can now understand why Rabbeinu Yonah lists the burial of Sarah as the final test. We asked: Could that have been a greater test than the Akeidah, which Avraham had already passed? The answer is, indeed, the burial of Sarah was not as challenging as the Akeidah in terms of sacrifice or heroism, and that is exactly what made it the final test.

Upon returning from the stunning success of passing the test of the Akeidah, Avraham finds his beloved wife, Sarah, dead. In a state of grief and deflation, he now needs to procure a burial plot from a

swindler who is surrounded by small-minded people. It is noteworthy that the Torah devotes a good number of verses to describing the purchase of the burial place for Sarah. Most of the verses involve either Avraham or the people bowing down to each other, or him and Efron saying, “Hear me, my master, etc.” to one another. These interactions represent the protocols of courtesy and consideration that are to be accorded to the other party on such occasions. This was the anticlimax of the Akeidah, the ultimate non-event, and it was here that Avraham underwent his final test. His absolute moral worth came through not in the moment of an extraordinary once-in-a-lifetime test, but as he exercised endless patience and extended gracious courtesy at his time of depression, pain and grief, toward people who, arguably, did not deserve it.

Contemplating this idea, a crucial message emerges. Ultimately, our tests bring out the best in us and make for our spiritual and moral growth. Sometimes, we can overlook the tests that exist within everyday situations while we are dreaming about how we would fare in a “real” test, forgetting that it is the “small things” that may be the greater test of who we are: a blessing recited properly, a listening ear, an encouraging word. Learning from the final test of Avraham can help us appreciate our everyday situations for what they really are — the ongoing building blocks of our spiritual growth.

[1] 5:3. [2] Commentary to Pirkei Avos, *ibid.* [3] Bava Basra 15b. [4] Iyov 1:1. [5] Michtav Me'Eliyahu, vol. 4, p. 245. Copyright © 2024 Journeys in Torah, All rights reserved. You're receiving this email either because you signed up on the website or you requested to be added.

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## Wedding Arrangements

**Rabbi Kaganoff** <[y mkaganoff@gmail.com](mailto:y mkaganoff@gmail.com)> Attachments Mon, Nov 18, 4:34 AM (4 days ago) to kaganoff-a  
Wedding Arrangements

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Wedding Arrangements By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff Question #1: Wedding Arrangements “Which sheva brochos custom is based on this week's parsha?” Question #2: Indoor Chupah “My cousin is making his chupah completely indoors. May I attend the wedding?” Question #3: Maaser Money “I agreed to support my married children for five years. May I set aside all my maaser money for this?” Introduction: Most of this week's parsha is devoted to the trip that Eliezer takes to find a wife for Yitzchok. This provides an opportunity to discuss some of the laws and customs about weddings and sheva brachos arrangements that we have not covered in previous articles. In his commentary on the Torah (Bereishis 24:3), Rabbeinu Bachya cites a custom that, on the day of a chosson's wedding, the part of the Torah in which Avraham gives Eliezer his instructions is read in the chosson's honor. This is to remind the chosson that he should choose his mate with the right considerations – so that they can grow in yiras shamayim and build a proper Torah family together – and not pick a wife for other reasons that will not

ultimately lead to proper goals. Many Sefardic communities continue this practice of reading the words of our parsha in honor of the chosson, although there are different variations of the custom. Some read this parsha when a chosson receives his aliyah to the Torah on the Shabbos of sheva brachos week, which is called the Shabbat chatan (Abudraham). On this occasion, some authorities cite a practice of reciting these pesukim accompanied by songs that praise the chosson (Sedei Chemed, Maareches Choson Vekallah paragraph 14 [Volume 7 page 33]). I have been in Sefardic batei kneset in which the custom is that, immediately after the chosson's aliyah, two members of the congregation, alternatively, read the pesukim in parshas Chayei Sarah from a chumash. Other reasons are quoted for the practice of reading this part of the Torah on the occasion of a Shabbat chatan. According to one approach, the reason is so that the chosson can read the Torah himself, as this is a reading that even a not-so-scholarly chosson would be familiar with and could easily learn. Yet another reason is that not every parsha has a pleasant and appropriate reading, so it became standardized to have a chosson read this (Tashbeitz 2:39). From a Sefer Torah or from a chumash? There are different customs regarding whether these pesukim are read from a Sefer Torah. The custom of reading this from the Sefer Torah is already mentioned by rishonim (Tashbeitz). Others mention the practice of reading it from a chumash, rather than a Sefer Torah. In the days before the printing press, this meant one of the five books of the Torah that had been hand-written onto parchment and bound like a book to be used for study. Special Sefer Torah?

2

The Tashbeitz quotes the practice of taking out a Sefer Torah from the aron kodesh just for the purpose of this special reading. The chosson would be called up to read the story of Eliezer from the second Sefer Torah. Others cite a custom of rolling the Sefer Torah to the story of Eliezer after the regular Shabbos reading is complete. Others say that this special reading should be from a Sefer Torah, but whether a Sefer Torah was taken out just for this purpose depends on whether the Shabbat chatan falls on a week in which one or two sifrei Torah would otherwise be used. According to this opinion, if only one Sefer Torah would otherwise be used, then a second Sefer Torah should be taken out for this purpose. If the Shabbat chatan falls on a week that there is a need to read from two sifrei Torah, the special reading in honor of the chosson is read by rolling the second Sefer Torah to parshas Chayei Sarah after the maftir has been read (Kaf Hachayim, Orach Chayim 144:10, quoting Keneses Hagedolah). Is a brocha recited prior to reading these pesukim? In places where the custom is to read the pesukim from a Sefer Torah, does the chosson recite a brocha before reading from the second Torah? Some rishonim rule that a brocha is recited before and after this reading, just as for any other aliyah (Tashbeitz). With the Targum or without? In communities in which the Torah was read together with the Targum, different customs are quoted whether the Targum translation for the story of Eliezer was also recited, or whether only the Targum for the weekly Torah reading was recited (Sedei Chemed, paragraph 14 [Volume 7 page 33]). This practice goes back to the days in which every community read the Targum after each posuk in order to translate the Torah for the benefit of the common people, who spoke and understood Aramaic, but not Hebrew. In few places today is the Targum recited together with the Torah reading, since most people do not understand the Aramaic in which the Targum is written, although it is still performed by many Yemenite

kehillos. Customs from the parsha Thus, we can now address the first of our opening questions: "Which sheva brochos custom is based on this week's parsha?" Actually, many of the customs of our weddings and sheva brochos have a basis somewhere in this week's parsha. The one we have discussed here is an ancient and still common Sefardic practice to read the pesukim of this week's parsha in which Avraham instructs Eliezer how he is to find a wife for Yitzchok. Indoor Chupah Having mentioned a custom that is practiced by Sefardim, let us discuss a custom that is practiced by Ashkenazim. The early authorities cite several practices that are used to herald good signs that the marriage should be successful, happy and fruitful. Among these practices is a custom of conducting the chupah under the open heavens, as a sign that the couple being married should merit a large family, as many as the stars of the heavens (Rema, Even Ha'ezer 61:1). This last practice has become fairly universal among Ashkenazim, although it is virtually unheard of among Sefardim, who usually make the chupah indoors. Among Ashkenazim who follow this practice, the most common practice in Eastern Europe was to conduct the chupah in the open-air courtyard in front of the shul. In some places in Germany, the custom was to make the chupah in the shul itself, rather than under the heavens (not following the custom mentioned by the Rema).

3

In nineteenth-century Hungary, with the persuasion of the Reform-influenced Neologue movement, it became a practice among assimilated Jews to conduct the weddings indoors, in the Neologue temples. In a responsum, the Chasam Sofer strongly disapproves of performing weddings indoors (Shu"t Chasam Sofer, Even Ha'ezer 1:98). At this point, let us examine the second of our opening questions: "My cousin is making his chupah completely indoors. May I attend the wedding?" There may be many very valid reasons why your cousin is making the chupah indoors. It could be that he is Sefardic, or descended from an area of Germany where chupos were traditionally made indoors. It also might be that this is a second wedding, or that the bride is beyond the age at which one would expect her to have children. In both of the latter instances, many authorities rule that there is no reason to make the chupah under the heavens. However, even should they be Ashkenazim, young, and marrying for the first time, and yet they insist on making the chupah indoors, there is no halachic reason why you cannot attend the wedding. Having the chupah under the heavens is a nice segulah, but not a mandatory halachic requirement. In this context, allow me to quote a responsum on this topic from Rav Moshe Feinstein (Shu"t Igros Moshe, Even Ha'ezer, 1:93). The questioner was a rav in a community in which the common practice was not to conduct the chupah under the heavens, unlike the practice recommended by the Rema. The rav asked whether he was permitted to perform the wedding ceremony, concerned that, if he did not, he would lose his position and his source of livelihood. Rav Moshe ruled that not only may he perform the ceremony, he is required to do so, and that this is included within his responsibilities as a hired rav – to make sure that matters such as marriages are conducted in halachically correct fashion. Performing the wedding under the heavens is not a requirement instituted by the Sages, nor does it qualify as a custom that we must observe; it is simply a good omen and good advice – but the individuals involved are not required to follow this advice if they choose not to. Rav Moshe writes that this ruling is true even according to the Chasam Sofer, notwithstanding his opposition to



those who got married indoors. Rav Moshe infers from the words of the Chasam Sofer that, although he frowned on the practice of conducting a wedding indoors, he did not prohibit it; he simply felt that it was improper. Furthermore, Rav Moshe contends that the Chasam Sofer's strong disapproval of making a wedding ceremony indoors was only in his day, when this approach was advocated by the Reform, whose goal was to uproot all of the practices of the Torah. These weddings, conducted in synagogues, were intended to mimic the practices of the non-Jewish world, which held its weddings in churches. However, in today's world, when people schedule wedding ceremonies indoors for practical and personal reasons, not because they want to mimic non-Jewish practices, the Chasam Sofer would not have such strident opposition. Therefore, Rav Moshe contends that even the Chasam Sofer would have ruled that a rav who is requested to be mesader kiddushin at a wedding where the chupah is indoors should accept. Early part of the month Early authorities cite other practices that are used to herald that the marriage should be successful, happy and fruitful. Another practice common both to Ashkenazim and Sefardim is that of scheduling a wedding at the beginning of the month, which is mentioned by both the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 179:2) and the Rema (Even Ha'ezer 64:3). In the same responsum quoted above, Rav Moshe notes that this practice is not halachically required.

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Therefore, someone who chooses not to observe this practice is not violating any halacha and there is no reason not to perform the wedding. In this context, it is interesting to quote an earlier teshuvah from the Noda Biyehudah, regarding people who are exceedingly careful not to set up a shidduch in which the father of the bride and the chosson have the same name, and similar concerns based on the writings of Rabbi Yehudah Hachassid. The Noda Biyehudah writes, "I am astonished that most people have no concern about marrying their daughter to a halachic ignoramus, notwithstanding the words of Chazal about the importance of marrying her to a Talmudic scholar ...yet they are concerned about having her marry someone whose name is the same as her father's which has no Talmudic basis or source" (Shu"t Noda Biyehudah, Even Ha'ezer 2:79). Thus, we see that the Noda Biyehudah does not consider the segulos that people attach to some of these practices as important. The significant factors are those mentioned by the Gemara. The chosson should be a Torah scholar, and his bride a ye're'ah Shamayim. Maaser Money At this point, let us examine the third and last of our opening questions, this one a very universal issue for both Ashkenazim and Sefardim: "I agreed to support my married children for five years. May I use maaser money for this?" The Chasam Sofer authored a responsum (Shu"t Chasam Sofer, Yoreh Deah #231) on this subject, which is fascinating for the many different halachic issues that he clarifies. Someone had arranged the marriage of his scholarly son to the daughter of a talmid chacham with the following understanding: The father of the son accepted that he would pay every week a certain amount to his mechutan, the bride's father, who would sustain the young growing family in his home, thus enabling the son-in-law to continue his studies under his father-in-law's direction. The father of the chosson is now finding it difficult to fulfill his weekly obligation, and wants to know if he can use the maaser money from his business endeavors to provide the support for which he is responsible. The Chasam Sofer opens his discussion by quoting two opinions that seem to dispute whether it is acceptable to use maaser money for

such an expenditure. The Rema, quoting the Maharil, contends that it is not permitted to use maaser money to pay for a mitzvah, such as donating lamps and candles to the shul, whereas the Shach states, in the name of the Maharam, that it is permitted to use maaser money for mitzvos. Thus, whether one may pay for mitzvos, other than supporting the poor, from maaser money appears to be a dispute among early authorities. The Chasam Sofer then quotes the Be'er Hagolah, who explains that the two above-quoted opinions are not in dispute. All authorities prohibit using maaser money to fulfill a mitzvah that someone is already obligated to observe. The Maharam, who permitted using maaser money for mitzvah purposes, was discussing a case in which the donor intended to use maaser money for this mitzvah from the outset, whereas the Maharil is discussing a situation in which the donor has been using his maaser money to support the poor, in which case he cannot now divert it for other mitzvos that do not qualify as tzedakah for the poor. Thus, according to the Be'er Hagolah, whether the father can begin meeting his obligations to his son and mechutan with his maaser money will depend on whether he has already accepted the obligation on himself to pay this from other funds, in which case he cannot use maaser money for it, or if it is an obligation that he is now accepting upon himself, in which case he can specify that he wants to use maaser money to fulfill it.

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The Chasam Sofer does not consider the approach of the Be'er Hagolah to be fully correct. He (the Chasam Sofer) notes that the Maharil wrote that maaser moneys are meant to support the poor and not for the acquisition of mitzvos. Therefore, use of maaser money for any type of personal mitzvah is inappropriate, whether he is already obligated to fulfill the mitzvah or not. The Chasam Sofer concludes that when someone begins donating maaser money, he may stipulate that, sometimes, the money will be used for a mitzvah donation, such as the lighting in shul. However, once he has begun donating his maaser money regularly to the poor, he must continue using it for tzedakah. Family first Having determined that there are definitely situations in which maaser money must be given to the poor, the Chasam Sofer then discusses when and whether money designated for the poor can be used to support an individual's extended family. There is a general rule that one is obligated to the poor to whom one is closest – close family first, more distant family next, neighbors third, members of one's city next and the out-of-town poor next. Greater needs Notwithstanding that family should be supported first, the Chasam Sofer quotes from his rebbi, the author of the Haflaah, that the rules of "closest first" or "family first" are only when the funds are necessary for the same level of need, for example, all have enough to eat but not enough for clothing. However, if some are short of food, and others have enough to eat but are short on clothing or other needs, the responsibility to make sure that someone has enough to eat comes first, even for someone out of town, regardless of whether there are neighbors or locals who are needy, as long as they have sufficient food. Yet, concludes the Chasam Sofer, this prioritization is not absolute. All needs of someone's family are considered his responsibility before the basic needs of others. In other words, the priorities should be as follows: (1) Family needs. (2) Most basic needs – food – regardless of location of the needy. (3) People of one's city. (4) The out-of-town poor. Chasam Sofer's conclusion If the father had stipulated at the time of obligating himself to support his son that he would use maaser money for this

obligation, he would be able to use it. Even then, the Chasam Sofer recommends that he use only up to half of his available maaser money to support his son. His reasoning is based on a Mishnah (Peah 8:6) which says that someone is permitted to save his maaser ani to support those that he chooses to, but he should not set aside more than half of his maaser ani for this purpose; the rest should be given to the local poor.

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However, this is only when he had originally planned to use maaser money for this purpose. Otherwise, once he created an obligation upon himself to support his son, it is similar to any other obligation that he has, and he may

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### **Should Kiddush Levana Be Done with a Minyan? by R. Daniel Mann**

Question: We usually do Kiddush Levana outside shul on Motzaei Shabbat. Is it supposed to be done with a minyan or some other minimum number of people?

Answer: Kiddush Levana is mentioned by an early Amora (Sanhedrin 42a). Early sources do not connect it to a minyan or to tefilla. The Pri Chadash (226:1) tries to prove it does not require a minyan from the fact that the mishna (Megilla 23b) does not list it as one of the things that requires a minyan. This implies that Kiddush Levana, which does not appear in Tannaic sources, was instituted before that mishna was written. Some point out that the gemara's language is singular. One way or another, there is insufficient source and/or logic to require a minyan, and the broad consensus is that one fulfills the mitzva even by doing it by himself.

That being said, many Acharonim (see Magen Avraham 426:6) have the minhag to try to have a minyan, applying to it a general rule in ritual matters: b'rov am hadrat melech (=brahm; the greater number of people who take part together, the greater the honor to Hashem). If that is the reason, it is clear why the mitzva counts without a minyan, as brahm is a classical hiddur (improvement to a mitzva) whose absence does not, as a rule, disqualify mitzvot. There is an opinion that because it is a beracha of shevach (praise), and it is seen as greeting the Divine Presence, a minyan is particularly important (Teshuvot V'hanhagot I:205). (The idea of it being a birkat hashevach is not very convincing, as the gemara sounds like it resembles other berachot in which we praise Hashem for natural phenomena (e.g., on thunder, seeing great bodies of water), which are not as a group.) The way the practice has developed, there is another gain in having a minyan, since we recite Kaddish after it (see Kaf Hachayim, Orach Chayim 426:13).

There is a question about what is needed to attain brahm status. There is an opinion in the gemara (Gittin 46a) that three people constitute rabim (many or public) (the other opinion says ten), and the Gra (to OC 422:2) accepts it and applies it to contexts similar to ours (see Rama, OC 422:2). Therefore, the Be'ur Halacha (to OC 426:2, based on Chayei Adam 68:11) says that the difference between doing Kiddush Levana with ten or three is not major. It is likely that the point is that is not mainly a question of what the minimum is for brahm. Rather there are levels of brahm and of hiddur.

Regarding under three, there is likely an advantage doing Kiddush Levana with another person. Rav Feinstein (Igrot Moshe, OC I, 146) sees precedent in the gemara that the presence of a second person shows one did not chance upon the moon but intentionally encountered it to show appreciation. Also, the Levush (626:1) points out that in order to fulfill the custom of saying "Shalom aleichem," one needs at least one other person.

Level of value is relevant regarding competing values. One such value is z'rizin makdimin l'mitzvot (it is best to do mitzvot as early as possible), which generally is more important than brahm (see Rosh Hashana 32b). A third value is specific to Kiddush Levana – it is preferable to do Kiddush Levana on Motzaei Shabbat, mainly because we are usually better dressed then (Shulchan Aruch, OC 426:2). The minhag is clearly to wait for Motzaei Shabbat even though one could have done it earlier. However, some say that if earlier there is a chance to do it with a minyan, whereas he will not have one on Motzaei Shabbat, the two advantages of doing it earlier win out in that case (see Sha'ar Hatziyun 426:20). The Be'ur Halacha (ibid.) says that while it is worthwhile to wait several days (when there is not concern of cloud cover until the middle of the month) to do it with a minyan, if earlier there is a chance to do it with three, the net gain does not necessarily justify the wait.

While we have not exhausted all the permutations and opinions, we have seen the logic and extent of the preference of having several people together for Kiddush Levana.

לעילוי נשמת יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוויאל זלצמן ז"ל

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PARPARSHAS CHAYEI SARAH 5785 Inbox  
Daryl Michel <daryl@bircas.org> Attachments Nov 20, 2024,  
7:04 AM (2 days ago) to bcc: me  
BS"D

Dear friends

Enjoy this week's schmooze and have a wonderful Shabbos.

### **for Rav Krieger Yeshivas Bircas HaTorah**

SHAS CHAYEI SARAH 5785 Serving an Adam Gadol  
By Rabbi Moshe Krieger, Yeshivas Bircas HaTorah

In Parshas Chayei Sarah, Avraham Avinu sends his servant, Eliezer, to undertake the most important task of finding a wife for Yitzchak. In the eyes of Chazal, Eliezer is a shining example of a talmid devoted to his rebbe. Eliezer had internalized Avraham's teachings and spread them throughout the world. He is called Damesek Eliezer because he was doleah umashkeh, meaning he drew up and taught all that he had learned from Avraham to the masses (Yoma 28b). Eliezer was master of all he [Avraham] possessed (Bereishis 15:2). In pshat, Avraham Avinu had entrusted all of his possessions to Eliezer, who oversaw all his affairs. Chazal (Bereishis Rabba 59:8) add depth to this expression: Eliezer had gone in Avraham's ways to the extent that he mastered all that he himself possessed — meaning, he was in full control of himself; a man of impeccable character who had purged himself of all bad middos. This leads to a question: When Avraham gave Eliezer the task of finding Yitzchak a wife, Eliezer hinted to Avraham that he himself had a daughter whom Yitzchak could marry (Rashi, Bereishis 24:39). Surely this loyal disciple of Avraham would not have hinted to such a proposal if his daughter was not at a spiritual level worthy of marrying Yitzchak. And yet, Avraham rejected Eliezer's idea with uncharacteristic sharpness: I am blessed and you [as a Canaanite, descended from Cham, whom Noach cursed] are cursed. A cursed being cannot cling to a blessed

one. Rav Dov Ze'ev Steinhaus, a mashgiach in Yeshivas Kol Torah, asks: How could Avraham, the archetypal baal chessed, speak so harshly to Eliezer? Moreover, the Medrash (Bereishis Rabba 60:7) states that since Eliezer had served Avraham so faithfully, he had literally become a new person, no longer cursed but in fact blessed. If so, it seems that Avraham's rejection of Eliezer was not only scathing but even unjustified? Rav Steinhaus answers that Avraham knew that Eliezer was a great man who had reached a high spiritual level, but he also knew that Eliezer's level depended on his servitude. Through being Avraham's servant, Eliezer maintained this powerful connection to his rebbe. Eliezer himself was aware of this, and therefore refers to himself always as eved Avraham. Eliezer's daughter was a maidservant in the house of Avraham and Sarah. To marry Yitzchak, Avraham would first have to free her, but once she was free of servitude, she might lose all of her greatness. This was Avraham's message, that without the yoke of servitude, both Eliezer and his daughter were apt to revert back to being cursed. This is an important lesson for us. Just like Eliezer was able to gain greatness by subjugating himself to Avraham, so too, we can reach greatness by submitting ourselves to a great talmid chacham. If you're in a yeshiva, submit yourself to the Rosh Yeshiva or Mashgiach. Heed his words and obey them, fulfill the sederim and other requirements of the yeshiva, and do your part in order that others will do so as well. If you're out of yeshiva, make sure to be part of a kehilla and submit yourself to the Rav. Sometimes, the demands of a Rav or Rosh Yeshiva may seem to us taxing or unduly stringent, but the way to greatness is to submit ourselves to them, even when it's hard. Moreover, look for ways to serve them. If you are traveling into town, ask the Rav: I'll be in town. Is there something I can take care of for you there? If you're handy, offer: Is there anything in the Rav's house that needs fixing? Find ways to be with the Rav and serve him. If you're in yeshiva, after the shiur, ask your magid shiur if you can help him put away the sefarim he used. This is a very important form of service called shimush talmidei chachamim, with two important benefits (see Brachos 7b). By serving a talmid chacham, you become more connected to him and can tap into his greatness. Also, extra closeness to him enables you to observe close-up his good middos, wisdom, yiras Shamayim, precise fulfillment of halacha and more. In short, you can see his greatness and learn from it, as did Eliezer with Avraham Avinu. Even a Canaanite maidservant was able to reach an exalted level of spiritual greatness through serving one of the gedolei hador. Chazal (Mo'ed Katan 17a, see Rosh) relate that once, a maidservant of the house of Rabbi Yehuda HaNassi saw a Jew hitting his adult son (which is forbidden) and put him into nidui (ex-communication). Later, when this man had corrected his ways, he sought out a sage who could remove the nidui, but this required someone who was on a higher level than the maidservant, and no sage was sure that he was greater than her. The maidservant was no longer alive to undo the nidui herself, so this man remained in nidui for several years, until finally, several sages joined together to undo it. Look how much greatness can be achieved simply by serving an adam gadol! R' Shlomo Lorincz, during his years of service to the public, and particularly as a Knesset member of Agudas Yisrael, merited 14 years in which he was very close to the Chazon Ish. Every meeting with the Chazon Ish brought out a new, awesome dimension of his character. Sometimes, it was his utter separation from anger, no matter what the circumstances. Other times, one saw how he had nothing in this world except Torah and avodas Hashem. One always

saw his inner sense of joy and yiras Shamayim. Other times, what struck me was his wisdom. People came to him with what seemed like hopelessly complicated issues, but through the Chazon Ish's astute questions, the answers became clear without his having to tell them what to do. Every time, I came away inspired, filled with a desire to try to emulate what I had seen, if only in part. If I only came to this world for those 14 years to observe this great man — it would have been enough! said R' Lorincz. May we be zoche to serve talmidei chachamim!

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**Rabbi Reisman – Parshas Chayei Sarah 5776 1.** This week's Parsha for the most part is the story of the world's most amazing Shadchan, Eliezer Eved Avraham who went to find a Shidduch for Yitzchok. As you know, when Eliezer had expressed to Avraham a desire that his daughter marry Yitzchok he was told as is found in Rashi to 24:39 (אתה ארור). You are inherently not suitable because you come from a Mishpacha which is under the title of Arur and therefore, go find a different Shidduch and that is what happened. Interestingly, Chazal tells us, that after this episode, Yatza Michlal Arur. Eliezer throughout this episode was so faithful, that Yatza Michlal Arur, he wasn't Arur anymore. It was too late though as the Shidduch had been done. Let's try to learn something from Eliezer Eved Avraham who was able to go from a category of Arur to non-Arur by his behavior here in the Parsha. It is said that the Chofetz Chaim could not come to a gathering and he sent instead Rav Meir Shapiro to represent him. He gave Rav Meir Shapiro the Drasha that he wanted him to deliver on behalf of the Chofetz Chaim. When he came there, they had a discussion as to who should speak first. Had the Chofetz Chaim attended, he certainly would have spoken first as the Zakein Hador and a Kohen to boot. Now that it was the young Rav Meir Shapiro, there was a discussion. Rav Meir Shapiro said I would rather speak last. I would rather speak as late as possible. Let me explain. We have the concept of Shlucho Shel Adam Kemoso, someone who is a Shaliach for someone else is like that person. As long as I have not delivered the speech I am a Shaliach of the Chofetz Chaim. Imagine, Kemoso, I am like the Chofetz Chaim. Let me be Shlucho Shel Adam Kemoso for as long as I possibly can. In this week's Parsha, Eliezer does a lot. The riddle is asked how many times does the name Eliezer appear in this week's Parsha? If you ask it at the Shabbos table you may get different guesses. But unless someone checked the number the person will get it wrong. This is because Eliezer's name does not appear at all. He is constantly called Eved Avraham. Because you see he fulfilled the Shlucho Shel Adam Kemoso. He wasn't Eliezer. He wasn't doing anything for himself. What he was doing was behaving as a Shaliach, Shlucho Shel Adam Kemoso of Avraham Avinu. By behaving that way long enough he actually turned into a M'ain of Avraham Avinu, a M'ain of Klal Yisrael. When a person raises himself to a level where he is looking to be someone better, someone more, and he actually behaves that way long enough, he raises himself even from the Klal of Arur. There is a parable told about a commoner who wanted to marry the princess. The commoner knew that he can never marry the princess. Just look at him, he had the face of an ordinary person, the face of a commoner. He decided that he would go to a master mask maker. He had the master mask maker make him a special mask. A mask which gave him the face of nobility, the face of importance, the face of wealth and prestige, and that he did. The mask maker gave him a mask and with that he was able to court the princess and marry her.

For many years he did not take off that mask. He walked wherever he went with this mask of nobility, prestige, and importance. One day an old friend came to visit him. In anger he said that is not your face. You are wearing a false face, a face of nobility, a face of importance? In his anger he ripped the mask off the face of this man and they gasped. Underneath the mask, his own natural face had turned into a face which was identical to the face on the mask. The point of the parable is that if you put on the mask of something greater, something better, something bigger, you aren't a phony. You really mean to aspire to that. You wear the mask, you act that way, then you can go from an Arur to a Baruch. You can go from something less to something more. Rav Avidor Miller used to say over that when he was in the Slabodka Yeshiva he was part of a Mussar Vaad. Every month they would work on one Middah. One month they gathered and discussed what Middah to work on. The suggestion came to work on the Middah of Emes. As Rabbi Miller said, there was one Mussarnik, an Alteh Mussarnik who said Emes? Feh! Everyone works with Emes. Let's spend this month to work on serving Hashem with Sheker. They decided that for that month they would serve Hashem with Sheker. The Sheker would be that they would aspire, they would pretend to be on a higher level. They would behave as if they were on a different level. They would say I can do this, I want to do that. For that month they worked on Sheker. Many years later, here in America, Rabbi Avigdor Miller would teach his Talmidim to work with Sheker. Say that I am doing this L'sheim Shamayim, even if you are not. Say to yourself I am doing it L'sheim Shamayim. Say it often enough and eventually you will. Eventually you will become the mask. I say the same thing to all of you Bnei Torah who go out to work. Keep the mask of the Ben Torah, keep the face of the Ben Torah. Keep the attitude of the Ben Torah. When you look in the mirror, see the Ben Torah. Aspire to it. Here you don't have to go from Arur to Baruch, you just have to be careful not to slip from Baruch to Arur. Wherever you go, wherever you Daven, wherever you learn, have that face, that Shprach, that expression. Even if in your heart you suddenly turn to care about silly things like sports and entertainment, never admit it, never express it. You will get to where you have to be. A lesson of Eliezer Eved Avraham. 2. I would like to move to a topic at the end of the Parsha in a part of the Parsha that is rarely quoted most probably because it is the least understood. We learn that after Sarah's death Avraham Avinu took another woman. This is found in 25:6 (פילגשים) where Rashi says (פלגש אחת) that it is actually one Pilegsh. If you look in our Chumash you will see Pilagshim in our Sefer Torah is written Malei even though Rashi says that it should be Chaseir. That is a question for a different week. So he went and took a woman named Keturah and he had children from her. As the Posuk tells us (ולבני הפילגשים) (אשר לאברהם נתן אברהם מתנת וישלחם מעל יצחק בנו חי קדמה אל ארץ קדם). He sends them far away to the Far East as we understand, and these are the children of Avraham who went to the Far East and the Far Eastern cultures come from them. The Gemara says in Maseches Sanhedrin 91a (4 lines from the bottom) (מאי מתנות אמר ר' ירמיה בר (אבא מלמד שמסר להם שם טומאה) that the Matanos he gave were the Sheim Hatumah. The powers that exist in the world that come from a negative place. The Sheim Hatumah. This is what it says in the Posuk as explained by the Gemara. There are two difficulties. 1) Why did he send his children away, they are his children? When Yishmael misbehaved as Rashi says, Yishmael was Over on Avodah Zorah and Gilui Arayos, Avraham was reluctant to send him away. Sarah

compelled him to. Why here did he send these Bnei Ketura to a distant land? 2) Why did he give them the Sheimos Hatumah, it is a Davar Pele. The Pachad Yitzchok in Mamarei Pesach Maimar 83 (Pei Gimmel) says that from here we have a connection to a Yesod of the Vilna Gaon, of the GRA. The GRA talks about the idea of Brisi, Es Brisi Avraham, Es Brisi Yitzchok, V'es Brisi Yaakov. HKB"H talks about the Bris of the Avos. The GRA says that the Bris of the Avos is well-known Chesed, Gevurah, and Tiferes. There is also a Bris of the Imahos. There is also something we have from our Imahos, Sarah, Rivka, Rachel, and Leah. Es Avraham, Es Yitzchok you don't say Bris Avraham you say Es Bris Avraham. The Es is Marbeh the women, the wives. As is the Derech of Nashim Tzidkonios to behave Kevuda Bas Melech P'nima with ultimate Tzniyus. So too, is the Bris hidden here in the word Es. What is the Bris of the Imahos, what is the Cheilek of the Imahos? To be a Chomeh, to be a protection. We know that there is a custom that the Kallah walks around the Chosson under the Chuppah seven times. That is based on an idea from Shir Hashirim that the wife, the Kallah is K'chomeh, like a wall surrounding or protecting the home that the Chosson and Kallah build together. It is a Chomeh. The Chomeh is to protect from spiritual dangers. The father gives the white, the mother gives the red in the language of the Gemara. The father gives the intellect, teaches the children how to learn and how to keep Mitzvos. The mother gives the red, the blood, the warmth, the heart. That is the Chomeh to be protected. We see this in the Imahos. The Bris Imahos of Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel, and Leah. Sarah said protect Yitzchok from outside influences. As it says in 21:10 (גַּרְשׁ הָאֱמָקָה (הַזֹּאת). Get rid of Yishmael, send him away. Rivka too, disagreed with Yitzchok and felt that Eisav's influence was negative and should not be included in Klal Yisrael. Even Rachel and Leah both of whom had only good children, they were the ones who understood on their own as it says in 31:15 (הָלוֹא נִכְרִיּוֹת נִקְשְׁבוּ לִי) that they should leave Lavan's home. Yaakov only understood it when HKB"H told him B'nevuah, they understood instinctively. The Bris Imahos is to be the Chomeh in the home. Avraham lost his wife, he lost Sarah. He understood that the Chomeh was missing, and therefore, he sent away the Bnei HaPilagshim. Why did he give them Kochos Hatumah? Yishmael and Eisav were sent away but they still aspire to be Klal Yisrael. Eisav, the catholic religion of today, is a people busy saying that we are the chosen people, we are Klal Yisrael. G-d has traded the Jewish people for us. Yishmael too, built their entire religion on the basis of that which was given over by the Jewish people for thousands of years until their Navi Sheker came and said we are the ones who descend from the bible. Avraham would have none of that. He said you go with the Kochos Hatumah, do what you need to do with it. Use it for good use it for bad, you are not Klal Yisrael. And so, we learn here about the idea of Bris Imahos, when the mother wasn't in the home the father had to take drastic steps to protect Klal Yisrael from the influence of others. Today, we live in a time when the dangers of the outside world are incredible. There is no Chomeh, there is no wall, there is no protection. We need to turn to the Imahos, the women of Klal Yisrael for the major part, the women are the ones who would have less access of internet, of outside influences in a person's home. If you are fortunate to have a wife, let her be the Chomeh. Listen to her when she suggests that the house be better protected, that the house be a Seviva that is better, that is more. 3. The question of the week is: When Rivkah appears, Rashi tells us that Yitzchok saw her greatness because of three

things. One of them is that the Shabbos candles were lit from Erev Shabbos to Erev Shabbos. His mother Sarah had lit candles and they burned from Erev Shabbos to Erev Shabbos and that stopped when she passed away, and now that Rivkah came, that miraculously burning of the Shabbos Licht began again. The question is this. After Sarah passed away, didn't Avraham light the Shabbos Licht in the home? If there is no woman in the home then the man is obligated to light. Avraham's Shabbos Licht didn't burn from Erev Shabbos to Erev Shabbos? Only Sarah, only Rivkah? Halo Davar Hu! Worth commenting on. With that I wish one and all an absolutely wonderful Gevaldige Shabbos Parshas Chayei Sarah!

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<https://jewishlink.news/when-prophecy-and-morality-clash/>  
**When Prophecy and Morality 'Clash' By Rabbi Moshe Taragin |**  
November 14, 2024

Avraham's journey introduced two fundamental traditions. For nearly 2,000 years, Hashem had seemed remote and withdrawn from humanity. Dwelling in the heavens, He rarely conversed directly with people. As humanity fell into moral decline, He responded with severe judgments. Yet, during this period, communication with the divine remained limited; there was little continuous dialogue between humankind and Hashem in Heaven.

Avraham revolutionized humanity's relationship with Hashem. Unlike previous generations, who had little direct contact with Hashem, Avraham not only received multiple prophecies about his future but also engaged in direct conversations with Hashem. He prayed fervently, received oaths and promises from Hashem, and even hosted Hashem in his humble tent while he recovered from circumcision. Avraham succeeded in transforming a distant, transcendent God into an immanent presence, making Hashem a tangible, direct part of human experience. Avraham established the tradition of prophecy, confirming that Hashem speaks directly to man.

Avraham also established a legacy of moral consciousness. He discerned a moral spirit embedded within Nature and assumed that there must be a moral architect to this grand machine. He recognized that Hashem's will was not only present in the upper cosmos but also in the moral fabric of life. With this understanding, he shaped his own personality to reflect these values, becoming an agent of moral welfare for others. He ended military conflicts, negotiated peace with enemies and settled disputes graciously. He liberated his nephew Lot from captivity, hosted anonymous travelers and defended the sinners of Sedom. Every action was driven by ethical standards, establishing a moral tradition of behavior.

Throughout Avraham's life, his prophetic conversations with Hashem and his moral actions seemed aligned. Prophecy and morality were synchronous. Until they weren't.

At the end of his life, Avraham received a chilling prophecy to sacrifice his son. Had he not already been convinced of the reliability and authenticity of previous prophecies, he could not possibly have carried out such a command. However, the divine voice he heard was one he had come to recognize, and, as he had done countless times before, he responded with "Hineni"—"Here I am," ready to follow Hashem's will without hesitation. The voice he heard emanating from Heaven was a familiar one.

However, this prophetic command directly contradicted his moral principles. It implied that Hashem desired human sacrifice, a practice Avraham had long rejected as part of the pagan cultures he

renounced. How could he, a father, take the life of his own child? This divine instruction tested the foundation of his moral framework. As a deeply religious individual, Avraham accepted the prophecy. He recognized that while human morality may clash with divine command, ultimate submission to Hashem's will is essential. Religious faith sometimes requires placing human moral reasoning beneath divine instruction. Human understanding sometimes fails to grasp the full moral reasoning behind Hashem's command, and religious commitment means trusting that divine decisions are inherently moral—even when they appear incomprehensible. This is the hallmark of a devout personality, where faith and submission take precedence over personal moral judgment.

Yet despite his practical submission to divine mandate, Avraham's approach to the Akeidah was not one of emotional detachment or robotic obedience. Rather, he maintained a deep, personal connection with his son throughout the ordeal. Instead of viewing the act as an impersonal command, Avraham referred to Yitzchak repeatedly as "his son" never allowing himself to depersonalize his child. While his obedience to Hashem was absolute, he refused to sever the natural, instinctive love he felt as a father.

The midrash paints a poignant picture of Avraham's internal moral struggle during the Akeidah. Despite his willingness to submit, he prayed fervently for Hashem to rescind the decree, unable to quell the natural love and sorrow he felt for his son. The midrash further describes Avraham crying tears of a mournful father, even though his heart was overjoyed to obey divine instructions. This emotional complexity reveals the depth of Avraham's character: He did not abandon his human emotions or moral spirit. Believing that prophecy and morality could, in the end, be reconciled, he also acknowledged that such reconciliation was beyond his immediate grasp. Facing this quandary and unwavering in his faith, he submitted to divine expectation, while still acknowledging the moral moment.

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from: **Rabbi Chanan Morrison** <chanan@ravkooktorah.org> to:  
internetparshasheet@gmail.com date: Nov 21, 2024, 2:16 AM  
subject: Chayei Sarah: **Rav Kook and Hebron**

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Chayei Sarah: Rav Kook and Hebron

"Sarah died in Kiryat Arba, also known as Hebron, in the land of Canaan. Abraham came to eulogize Sarah and to weep for her." (Gen. 23:2)

A somber gathering assembled in Jerusalem's Yeshurun synagogue. The large synagogue and its plaza were packed as crowds attended a memorial service for the Jews of Hebron who had been killed during the Arab riots six months earlier, on August 24th, 1929.

On that tragic Sabbath day, news of deadly rioting in Hebron reached the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. Yitzchak Ben-Zvi, then director of the National Committee, hurried to Rav Kook's house. Together they hastened to meet with Harry Luke, the acting British High Commissioner, to urge him to take immediate action and protect the Jews of Hebron.

The Chief Rabbi demanded that the British take swift and severe measures against the Arab rioters.

"What can be done?" Luke asked.

Rav Kook's response was to the point. "Shoot the murderers!"

"But I have received no such orders."

“Then I am commanding you!” Rav Kook roared. “In the name of humanity’s moral conscience, I demand this!”

Rav Kook held the acting commissioner responsible for British inaction during the subsequent massacre. Not long after this heated exchange, an official reception was held in Jerusalem, and Mr. Luke held out his hand to greet the Chief Rabbi. To the shock of many, Rav Kook refused to shake it.

With quiet fury, the rabbi explained, “I do not shake hands defiled with Jewish blood.”

The day after the rioting in Hebron, the full extent of the massacre was revealed. Arab mobs had slaughtered 67 Jews — yeshiva students, elderly rabbis, women, and children. The British police had done little to protect them. The Jewish community of Hebron was destroyed, their property looted and stolen. The British shipped the survivors off to Jerusalem. The tzaddik Rabbi Arieh Levine accompanied Rav Kook that Sunday to Hadassah Hospital on HaNevi'im Street to hear news of the Hebron community by telephone. Rabbi Levine recalled the frightful memories that would be forever etched in his heart: When [Rav Kook] heard about the murder of the holy martyrs, he fell backwards and fainted. After coming to, he wept bitterly and tore his clothes “over the house of Israel and God’s people who have fallen by the sword.” He sat in the dust and recited the blessing, Baruch Dayan Ha'Emet (“Blessed is the True Judge”). For some time after that, his bread was the bread of tears and he slept without a pillow. Old age suddenly befell him, and he began to suffer terrible pains. This tragedy brought about the illness from which the rabbi never recovered. The Memorial Service Six months after the massacre, grieving crowds filled the Yeshurun synagogue in Jerusalem. A mourning atmosphere, like that on the fast of Tisha B'Av, lingered in the air as they assembled in pained silence. Survivors of the massacre, who had witnessed the atrocities before their eyes, recited Kaddish for family members murdered in the rioting. Rabbi Jacob Joseph Slonim, who had lost his son (a member of the Hebron municipal council) and grandchildren in the massacre, opened the assembly in the name of the remnant of the Hebron community.

“No healing has taken place during the past six months,” he reported. “The murder and the theft have not been rectified. The British government and the Jewish leadership have done nothing to correct the situation. They have not worked to reclaim Jewish property and resettle Hebron.”

Afterwards, the Chief Rabbi rose to speak:

The holy martyrs of Hebron do not need a memorial service. The Jewish people can never forget the holy and pure souls who were slaughtered by murderers and vile thugs.

Rather, we must remember and remind the Jewish people not to forget the city of the Patriarchs. The people must know what Hebron means to us.

We have an ancient tradition: “The actions of the fathers are signposts for their descendants.” When the weak-hearted spies arrived at Hebron, they were frightened by the fierce nations inhabiting the land. But “Caleb quieted the people for Moses. He said, ‘We must go forth and conquer the land. We can do it!’” (Numbers 13:30)

Despite the terrible tragedy that took place in Hebron, we announce to the world, “Our strength is now like our strength was then.” We will not abandon our holy places and sacred aspirations. Hebron is the city of our fathers, the city of the Machpelah cave where our

Patriarchs are buried. It is the city of David, the cradle of our sovereign monarchy.

Those who discourage the efforts to restore the Jewish community in Hebron with arguments of political expediency; those who scorn and say, “What are those wretched Jews doing?”; those who refuse to help rebuild Hebron — they are attacking the very roots of our people. In the future, they will be held accountable for their actions. If ruffians and hooligans have repaid our kindness with malice, we have only one eternal response: Jewish Hebron will once again be built, in honor and glory!

The inner meaning of Hebron is to draw strength and galvanize ourselves with the power of Netzach Yisrael, Eternal Israel.

That proud Jew, Caleb, announced years later, “I am still strong... As my strength was then, so is my strength now” (Joshua 14:11). We, too, announce to the world: our strength now is as our strength was then. We shall reestablish Hebron in even greater glory, with peace and security for every Jew. With God’s help, we will merit to see Hebron completely rebuilt, speedily in our days.

Addendum While some Jewish families did return to Hebron in 1931, they were evacuated by the British authorities at the outset of the Arab revolt in 1936. For 34 years, there was no Jewish community in Hebron — until 1970, when the State of Israel once again permitted Jewish settlement in Hebron. This return to Hebron after the Six-Day War was spearheaded by former students of the Mercaz HaRav yeshiva, disciples of Rav Kook’s son, Rabbi Zvi Yehda Kook.

In 1992, Rav Kook’s grandson, Rabbi Shlomo Ra’an’an, moved to Hebron. Six years later, an Arab terrorist stabbed the 63-year-old rabbi to death. But soon after, his daughter — Rav Kook’s great-granddaughter — along with her husband and children, moved to Hebron, thus continuing the special link between the Kook family and the city of the Patriarchs.

(Stories from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Malachim Kivnei Adam, pp. 155-157; 160; 164-165)

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Vol. 18 Issue #5 Parashat Chayei Sarah הרש"י תש"פ

### **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'eilas 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

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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'eilas 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.