

B'S'D'
INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON CHAYEI SARA - 5761

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From riskin@lists.virtualjerusalem.com parsha@ohrtorahstone.org.il
RABBI RISKIN=S Parashat Hashavua List

Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Chayei Sarah (Genesis 23:1-25:18) by Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel - These last several months in Israel have been a literal hell on earth, especially for those Israeli citizens living in the settlements as well as for the residents of Gilo and the rest of Jerusalem. The roads and highways have turned into mortal danger zones, firebombs and gunshots threatening the lives of anyone in a moving vehicle; homes have ceased to be havens of safety as children are forced to fall asleep to the sound of whizzing bullets and the sight of incendiary bombs.

Strangely enough, three of the major targets are grave-sites, one of which is the major subject of this week's Torah portion. Early on in this round of violence, Joseph's Grave Site-Yeshiva in Shechem was the scene of a tragic shoot-out which claimed the life of one Israeli (who bled to death because the Palestinians wouldn't allow him to be evacuated), and, after it was taken over and desecrated by the Palestinians, another Israeli - Hillel Lieberman - was murdered when he attempted to rescue some of the holy books. Rachel's tomb in Bethel is one of the hot points of Palestinian fire virtually every evening. And of course Hebron, and specifically the area surrounding the Ma'arat Ha Machpela (the cave of the couples: Adam and Eve as well as our Patriarchs and Matriarchs) is a spot of almost constant violence and attack.

The irony of all this is that a goodly part of this week's Torah portion deals with Abraham's purchase of the Hebron grave-site from the Hittites in order to bury his beloved wife Sarah. The Bible describes in painstaking detail how the patriarch requests to buy the grave, how the Hittites wish him to take it for free, and - when Efron the Hittite finally agrees to make it a purchase - he charges Abraham the inflated and outlandish sum of four hundred silver shekels (which some archeologists value at \$200,000). The Midrash seems perplexed: Why expend so much ink and parchment - the entire chapter 23 of the Book of Genesis - over a Middle -Eastern souk sale?

Moreover, what is the significance in the fact that the very first parcel of land in Israel acquired by a Jew happens to be a grave-site? And finally, how can we explain the irony of the present day Israeli-Palestinian struggle over grave-sites?

In order to understand our Biblical portion, it is important to remember that, throughout the ancient world, with the single exception of Athens, the only privilege accorded a citizen of a specific country was "of right" burial; every individual wanted his body to ultimately merge with the soil of his familial birthplace. Abraham insists that he is a stranger as well as a resident (ger toshav) of Het; he lives among, but is not one of the Hittites. Abraham is a proud Hebrew; he refuses "of right" burial but demands to pay - even if the price be exorbitant - for the establishment of a separate Hebrew cemetery. Sarah's separate grave-site symbolizes her separate and unique identity; she must die as a Hebrew and not a Hittite!

When I was a very young rabbi, one of the first "emergency"

questions I received was from an older woman leaning on a young Roman Catholic Priest for support. She tearfully explained that her husband - who had died but a few hours before - was in need of a Jewish burial place. He had converted to Catholicism prior to having married her - and agreed that their children would be raised as Catholics; the Roman Catholic Priest was their son. She never met any member of his Jewish family. For the past thirty-five years of their married life together, they both lived as Catholics. But his final deathbed wish had been to be buried in Jewish cemetery....

Permit me one more story.

My good and beloved friend, Zalman Bernstein z"l, asked me to find him a grave-site in the Mount of Olives cemetery - when he was still living in America and was only at the beginning of his return to Judaism. With the help of the Hevra Kadisha (Sacred Fellowship) of Jerusalem, we set aside a plot. When he inspected it, however, he was most disappointed; "You cannot see the Temple Mount," he shouted, in his typical fashion. I attempted to calmly explain that after 120 years, he wouldn't be able to see anything anyway. "You don't understand," he countered. "I made a mess of my life so far and did not communicate to my children the glories of Judaism. The grave is my future and my eternity. Perhaps, when my children come to visit me there, if they would be able to see the holiest place in the world, the Temple Mount, they will be inspired by the Temple and come to appreciate what I could not adequately communicate to them when I was alive..."

For an individual, his/her personal grave-site represents the future, the one place into which his/her physical remains will be united for eternity and from where one may be visited by family and friends even after one has died. For a nation, the grave-sites of its founders and leaders represent the past, the signposts which reveal the highs and lows in the course of the nation's history.

But both of these notions coalesce into one; for individual as well as nation, a grave is both past as well as future. Where and how individuals choose to be buried speak volumes about how they each lived their past lives and what their truest values were; and how a nation regards its grave-sites and respects its history will determine the quality of its future.

Indeed, the nation which chooses to forget its past has abdicated its future, because it has erased the tradition of continuity which it ought have transmitted to the future; the nation which does not properly respect the grave-sites of its founding parents will not have the privilege of hosting the lives of their children and grandchildren. Is it then any wonder that the first parcel of land in Israel purchased by the first Hebrew was a grave-site, and that the fiercest battles over ownership of the land of Israel surround the graves of our founding fathers and mothers?

Shabbat Shalom.

You can find Rabbi Riskin's parshiot on the web at:
<http://www.ohrtorahstone.org.il/parsha/index.htm> Ohr Torah Stone
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Parashah Talk

Parshas Chayei Sarah

Let it be that the girl to whom I will say, "Please tip over your jug so that I may drink," and who replies, "Drink, and I will also give your camels to drink" - it is her whom You have designated for Your servant, for Yitzchak (Genesis 24:14).

It is clear that Eliezer meant this theoretical chain of events to be a sign from heaven that the girl who would respond in this manner would be Yitzchak's intended mate. Nevertheless, he did not choose a random sequence of events for this sign, but rather acted with great wisdom. He

wanted to test the girl whom he would meet at the well for several traits - generosity, wisdom, and sensitivity to the feelings of others.

Eliezer did not have a cup himself, and he planned to ask the girl to "tip over her jug" for him to drink from the jug itself. Would the girl accede to his request to give a total stranger a drink directly from a large jug, although this would render the jug's entire contents undesirable for other to drink, for esthetic and sanitary reasons? This would determine the extent of the girl's kindness and generosity.

After this Eliezer would watch to see what exactly the girl would do with the leftover water. If she would ignore the stranger's drink and bring the rest of the water home to her family, this would indicate a lack of wisdom, for how could she know that the man's mouth was not filthy or diseased? And if she would simply spill out the remainder of the water onto the ground, this would display a lack of sensitivity to the stranger, for it would be a demonstration that she suspected him of having contaminated the water by his drinking. The only reaction that would display both wisdom and sensitivity would be to pour out the rest of the water for the camels.

Nevertheless, even if a girl would come along who would pass all three character tests, it would not necessarily prove beyond a doubt that she would be the appropriate wife for the saintly Yitzchak and a suitable daughter-in-law for Avraham. Eliezer therefore had to introduce a fourth aspect to his words - his prayer to G-d that this particular reaction from the girl should be a sign from heaven that the girl was indeed Yitzchak's intended wife.

In fact, Rivkah passed the test with results far beyond Eliezer's expectations. She did not reply, as Eliezer has hoped, by saying, "Drink, and I will also give your camels to drink," meaning that she would pour out the remainder of the jug's contents into the camel trough. Rather, she responded, "Drink and I will also draw water for your camels" (vv. 18-19). Rivkah apparently thought that simply spilling out the water into the trough might make it too obvious that she did not wish to use the leftover water for human drinking, so she immediately offered to draw additional water, enough to water all the camels "until they finish drinking" (ibid.). This showed an even greater measure of wisdom and sensitivity than expected.

- BEIS HALEVI

Excerpt from Brisk on Chumash, by Rabbi Asher Bergman.

From: RABBI YISROEL CINER ciner@torah.org

Parsha-Insights - Parshas Chayei Sarah

This week we read the parsha of Chayei Sarah--the life of Sarah. Our parsha begins with the counting of Sarah's years upon her death. Avrohom subsequently procures ownership of Ma'aras Hamachpelah {the Tomb of the Patriarchs} and buries Sarah there. With that, Avrohom turns his attention to finding the right wife for his son, Yitzchak.

"And Hashem had blessed Avrohom with everything." [24:1]

The Ramban explains that Avrohom had been blessed with wealth, property, honor, long life and sons.

"And Avrohom said to his servant (Eliezer), the elder of his house, who ruled over all that he (Avrohom) had..." [24:2]

The Sages offer a number of explanations of the rule that Eliezer had over Avrohom's household. Some say that he ruled over his desires and inclinations in the same way as Avrohom. Others explain it to mean that he ruled--had mastery--over the Torah of his master, Avrohom. The simple meaning is, of course, that he was in charge of Avrohom's considerable estate and holdings. Clearly, Avrohom had absolute trust in Eliezer's integrity and judgment.

With that in mind, Rav Sholom Shwadron zt"l points out, the continuation of that very same passuk seems to be puzzling.

"Bplace your hand beneath my thigh and I will make you swear by

Hashem, the G-d of the heavens and the G-d of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son (Yitzchak) from the daughters of the Cananites amongst whom I dwell." [24:2-3]

Why was there a need for Avrohom to make Eliezer take an oath? What happened to the trust?

Rav Sholom explains with the following story. Rav Yisroel Salanter zt"l once traveled to a small village where the townspeople were impatiently awaiting the arrival of their shochet {ritual slaughterer}. Rav Yisroel wasn't known in the town but, based on his religious appearance, was approached by one of the men and asked if he would please shecht {ritually slaughter} the animals for them.

Rav Yisroel didn't answer directly but rather led the conversation in a different direction. After a short while, Rav Yisroel asked this man if he'd lend him a sum of five rubles, explaining that he had money in his house and he'd be able to repay him very quickly.

The surprised man turned to Rav Yisroel, responding that a wise man such as he should know that you can't expect someone who doesn't really know you to give you a loan.

Having gotten him exactly where he wanted him, Rav Yisroel asked how he could trust him to shecht his animals if he didn't trust him for five rubles!

The Brisker Ruv zt"l was once asked why, after he had heard a perfectly halachic {in accordance with Jewish Law} sounding of the shofar {ram's horn blown on Rosh Hashana--the Jewish New Year}, he was still so nervously worried that perhaps he hadn't properly fulfilled his obligation.

He explained that a person who's carrying a million dollars in his pocket will incessantly check his pockets every few steps to make sure that it's still there. We don't ask why he's so worried! We don't ask why, if it was there a few seconds before, does he need to check again a few seconds later! We don't ask because we understand that a million dollars are at stake.

"To me," the Brisker Ruv concluded, "the mitzvah {commandment} of shofar is worth no less than a million dollars B"

We can trust people to shecht even though we wouldn't lend them a dime. We're worried about our possessions but can't understand when someone else is worried about shofar. Avrohom, however, had a very opposite attitude B

Avrohom had absolute trust in Eliezer when it came to the small, inconsequential matters of his life such as all of his life-savings and possessions. But when a wife for Yitzchak--the foundation upon which the entire destiny of the nation of Israel would be built--was being discussed, there Avrohom's trust fell short. "Place your hand beneath my thigh and I will make you swear by Hashem, the G-d of the heavens and the G-d of the earth." No oath, no go-eth.

It's a constant battle to keep our priorities straight, realizing what is truly valuable and important and being willing to sacrifice material gains on the altar of our spiritual convictions and responsibilities. Two of my closest talmidim {students/brothers/friends} have become quite successful in the music business. I'm always inspired by their tenacious commitment to Shabbos in the face of many tempting offers.

They set what I believe was a legal precedent when they signed a deal with a major recording label. Included in the contract was a 'Shabbos clause' stating that any deadline placed upon them would automatically not include Shabbos or any Jewish Holidays. A ninety-day deadline would thus exclude any Shabbos days, automatically turning it into a 102+ day deadline.

When the Olympics were being held in Atlanta they were in strong demand, playing close to twenty shows. In the face of strong pressure, they, of course, refused to play on Friday night. That Friday night, for those who remember, a bomb exploded under the stage where one of the bands was playing--a stage where they had previously played. When they told me the story I recalled the saying that Shabbos keeps the Jews far

more than the Jews keep Shabbos.

Priorities. Focus. Knowing when to trust and when to be suspicious. When to worry and when to chill. When to perform and when to make kiddush {Sabbath sanctification made over wine}.

Good Shabbos, Yisroel Ciner

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From: RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY rmk@torah.org
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Drasha - Parshas Chayai Sorah -- Whose the Man?

Dedicated l'zecher nishmas (in loving memory of) Dovid ben Volf (Dennis Graham) a"h.

This week, the Torah tells us the fascinating story of Eliezer's mission to find a wife for Yitzchok, his master Avraham's son. Eliezer was referred to in previous portions as one who drew from the teachings of his master. In order to accomplish his mission, Eliezer must interact. First he must meet the prospective bride, Rivka, then her parents, Bsuel and Milkah, and then Rivka's conniving brother Lavan.

The Torah spares no effort to describe at length the ordeal of choosing the bride. Throughout the narrative, Eliezer, the servant of Avraham, is referred to in different ways. Sometimes he is called the "servant of Avraham," other times he is called, just plainly, "the servant, and other times he is "the man." First he gives Rivka gifts: "And it was, when the camels had finished drinking, the man took a golden nose ring, its weight was a beka, and two bracelets on her arms, ten gold shekels was their weight" (Genesis 24:282). When Lavan sees the gifts he is excited, and he "approached the man, who was still standing by the camels by the spring" (ibid. v.30).

When Eliezer formally introduces himself to Bsuel he declares his identity quite firmly. "I am a servant of Avraham" (ibid v. 34). And when Eliezer hears the words of acceptance from the soon-to-be in-laws, the Torah tells us, "when Abraham's servant heard their words, he prostrated himself to the ground unto Hashem" (ibid v.59).

Once again, he gives gifts to the new-found family. This time, however, he is not called with Avraham's servant, but just plainly, "the servant brought out objects of silver and gold, and garments, and gave them to Rebecca; and delicious fruits he gave to her brother and her mother" (ibid v. 60). There seems to be some special condition for using the terms servant of Avraham. Don't we know who he was? I'd like to add my inflection on that title.

One evening, Rav Moshe Feinstein received a call from a young man whom he had never met. "I would like to ask the Rosh Yeshiva to be m'sader kidushin at my wedding." Rav Moshe reacted with a bit of surprise. "But I do not know you. Why are you calling me? Don't you have your own rabbi?"

The young man explained. "I come from a simple family with no yichus, (important lineage). I daven in a small shul with a little-known rabbi. Boruch Hashem, I am marrying a girl who comes from a family of well known origins, and many distinguished rabbis and lay leaders will be attending the wedding on her behalf.

"I, on the other hand, have little money and even less genealogical prestige. My in-laws don't think I am much of a scholar, and though I try to learn whenever I can, it seems that my bride's parents are disappointed in her choice. My parents are very quiet and simple people. They hardly know anyone, and I must admit that I am embarrassed that I will have no famous rabbis who will come from my side of the simcha. It would

therefore be a tremendous encouragement to me if the Rosh Yeshiva would come on my behalf, and serve as the officiating rabbi.

At the time, Rabbi Feinstein was the dean of the prestigious Mesivta Tifereth Jerusalem in New York, the head of the council of Torah Sages of Agudath Israel, and filled with myriad responsibilities to fulfill on a communal and personal level. In addition, he was not a young man, and the trip to the wedding would put further strain on his weary body. Nevertheless, Rav Moshe obliged. And the kallah's (bride's) family reacted in with awe for the prestige of the groom. "Imagine," they thought, "his rabbi is none other than the revered Gadol HaDor, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein!"

With that, the young man was able to forge the foundations of a respect that reverberated throughout his married years.

Matches are very delicate, and when Eliezer produced the beautiful gifts, he did not have to be known as Avraham's servant. "The servant gave gifts. The man took out a nose ring." But when it comes to laying the story out clearly, Eliezer puts away the monetary status and replaces it with something that money can't buy.

He declares his affiliation. I am the servant of Avraham. And when he thanks Hashem for the success, it is not the man talking, nor is it the servant. It is the servant of Avraham. Because when one goes into a spiritual deal, he need not present pecuniary credentials or show his bankbook. All he has to do is align himself with the right people, those who are well connected. Good Shabbos 1 2000 Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Dedicated in memory of Alta Chaya Rasha bas R' Mordechai --
Roberta Katz By Shmuel and Goldie Katz and Family

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From: weekly@lists.virtualjerusalem.com ohr@virtual.co.il Subject: Torah Weekly - Chayei Sarah

* TORAH WEEKLY * Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion
Parshat Chayei Sarah

JEWISH FASHION

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

Nothing is more ironic than fashion. About six months after you throw out your ultra-wide kipper-tie as being a fashion relic never to return, you see blazoned across the fashion page "The Return of the Kipper-Tie." A year after you bid farewell to your antique bell-bottom Levi's, they re-appear in the shops at house-mortgaging prices.

If you hang on to anything long enough, it's bound to come back into fashion.

That's really the history of the Jewish People. We've hung on to our devotion to Torah even when it was about as fashionable as a kipper-tie or a pair of winkle-pickers. Even when it looked like the Bible critics had it all their own way, suddenly a book like "The Bible as history" by Kathleen Kenyon comes along and demonstrates with cool scientific precision that the Torah's historical narrative is accurate and that archeology has discovered nothing to contradict it. And Jews start dusting off their copy of the Torah like their old bell-bottoms.

In Germany, a hundred years ago when it was the trendy thing to treat Judaism as no more than a membership to a quaint club, when the Torah was about as fashionable as plus-fours, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch built a community that looked the modern world squarely in the eye and showed how a Jew could live in it without compromising a single inch of his love and commitment to the G-d of Israel and His Torah.

Yes, if you hang on to something, it always comes back into fashion. But there's another fashion. A fashion that never changes. Paris may move hem-lines up and down three-or-so feet, Milan may make necklines that soar and plunge, but the Jewish woman has her fashion -- and it never goes out of style. It's called tzniut.

Tzniut is usually mistranslated as modesty. It really means "private" and "bearing humility." The Jewish woman garbs herself in tzniut and nothing makes her more beautiful. Not the latest from Dior or Cacharel. Not the sequins or the boas of Givenchy. The "Designer label" that lifts the Jewish woman above being a decorative dolly is tzniut.

The Jewish woman's legacy of tzniut comes from our mother, Sarah. Sarah passed away at the age of 127. The Torah records her age in an unusual manner. It says "Sarah's lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years and seven years." Why not just write "Sarah's lifetime was 127 years?"

Sarah's beauty at twenty years was the same as when she was seven. Just as a seven year-old has a beauty which is wholesome and unaffected, so Sarah at age twenty had that same unaffected beauty which neither needs nor employs cosmetics or high-fashion. An un-gilded beauty which radiates because it is concealed. That's Jewish fashion.

* Chizkuni

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http://www.torahweb.org/torah/1999/parsha/rsch_chayey.html
[From last year]

RABBI HERSCHEL SHACHTER
Parshat Chayei Sara - Jewish Burial

The Torah tells us that when our mother, Sara, died Avraham refused to bury her in the general municipal cemetery. He insisted on designating a separate location as kever yisroel. Why have the Jews insisted throughout the ages on maintaining a separate cemetery?

The halachah divides all religious articles used to fulfill mitzvot into two categories: tefillin, mezuzah, and sifrei Torah, are labeled as "tashmishei kedushah"; as opposed to lulav, a shofar, an etrog, and schach of a sukkah, which are labeled as, "tashmishei mitzvah". The practical difference between the two categories is the following: an old pair of tefillin, or an old sefer Torah or mezuzah, which can no longer serve as the object of a mitzvah, may not be discarded but must be placed in the sheimot and buried in a dignified fashion. An old lulav or shofar which one no longer plans to use for mitzvah purposes loses its status as "huktzah limitzvato" and need not be placed in the sheimos and may be discarded. The sanctity which descends upon "tashmishei mitzvah" which is derived from the fact that "chal shem shamayim al hasukkah" is only temporary in nature, and vanishes into thin air as soon as the object is no longer set aside for use in the performance of a mitzvah.

How did the Rabbis know how to determine which religious articles belonged to which category? R. Chaim of Volozhin explains in his work, "Nefesh Hachayim", that the source of all permanent kedushah is the

Torah. tefillin, mezuzah and sefer Torah, which all contain passages from the Torah are considered as tashmishei kedushah. Even the bayit of the shel rosh which only has the letter shin on it, also qualifies as tashmishei kedushah. One word, even one letter of Torah has the significance of Torah. The sukkah, the etrog, and the tzitzit, however have no Torah confined within them, and therefore can not qualify as tashmishei kedushah.

The human body is always involved in the performance of mitzvot while one is alive. The fact that all men have the tzelem elokim would certainly more than sufficient to require that we respect each other. But after one dies, and the tzelem elokim is no longer there, and the body is no longer performing mitzvot there should no longer be any requirement to respect the dead body. Here the halachah of tashmishei kedushah becomes relevant. The Jewish body, which was involved with Torah acquires the status of tashmishei kedushah and may not simply be discarded after death. And even those Jews who never learned a word, or even a letter of Torah during their lifetime, according to the talmudic tradition had already been involved in Torah study before they were born. Hence, the Jewish dead must be buried with dignity, in a separate Jewish cemetery.

If one placed an old lulav or an old shofar into the sheimos this would be disrespectful to the tashmishei kedushah which are found there. It is the study of Torah which endows the Jew with the kedushat yisroel.

From: yitorah@lists.virtualjerusalem.com abba@bigfoot.com
Subject: NCYI Weekly Divrei Torah - Parshat Chayei Sarah
Parshat Chayei Sarah RABBI SIMCHA KRAUSS Young Israel of Hillcrest, NY

27 Chesvan 5761 November 25, 2000 Daf Yomi: Nazir 39

The Sidra of this week describes two unrelated events. It begins with the death of Sarah and Abraham's efforts to provide her with an appropriate burial place. It continues with Abraham's sending his messenger to find a suitable wife for his son, Isaac, and Eliezer's success in this endeavor as Rivkah returned with Eliezer to marry Isaac.

These two events - the death of Sarah and Isaac's marriage to Rivkah - are not only chronologically related. They are also logically related. The point that the Torah wants to make here is that despite Sarah's death, she continues to live. The Midrash comments on the verse - "And Isaac brought her (Rivkah) into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rivkah and she became his wife; and he loved her. And Isaac was comforted for his mother" (Genesis 24:57) as follows: "The candles remained lit from Erev Shabbat to Erev Shabbat, the blessing reigned in her dough and the cloud of glory returned to her tent." In other words Sarah's legacy continued. Sarah's spirit - her teachings remained dominant and greatly influenced the lives of Isaac and Rivkah.

Indeed commentators note an interesting linguistic phenomenon. The Sidra begins with "And the life of Sarah" though the subject is Sarah's death. Likewise, at the end of Genesis where the theme is the death of Jacob, the Sidra begins with "And Jacob lived." The point is that the righteousness, the goodness, the heroic deeds of Jacob live on despite Jacob's physical absence. Sarah died. But "Vayhi Chaye Sarah" and the life of Sarah, her life's work, her having established Abraham's household out of which emerges the people of Israel, that remains. Sarah's life goes on.

The point has to be carried further. The Torah teaches us a lesson on how to deal with misfortune and with tragedy.

At times a person reacts to tragedy with total and utter nihilism. In the face of tragedy one's faith in G-d is tested. When the righteous suffer and when evil prospers, how does one react? In truth, this test of faith, when faced by adversity, is difficult to pass. How a just G-d can allow the reign of evil, or to put it in a contemporary context "Why bad things

happen to good people" is not a question that can be easily answered.

In fact our tradition tells us that the struggle to understand G-d's ways goes back to Job and, indeed, to Moses. When Moses asked G-d "Show me Your glory" it refers to, according to Maimonides, exactly this problem of Theodicy - justifying G-d's inscrutable ways to man.

However, and this is the point in this week's Sidra - man ought not become paralyzed by the problem. Sarah died and Sarah was buried. But had Abraham remained forever in mourning, had he become forever paralyzed by his personal tragedy, Isaac would not have continued to build the household of Israel. In order for Sarah's vision to continue, Abraham had to get up and take an active part and make certain that the tragedy of Sarah's death not paralyze him.

We, of course, observe Tisha B'av. We cry and we weep. We fast, we behave as mourners and we lament for a commonwealth that was destroyed and a Temple that is still not rebuilt. But after Tisha B'av we wash, we get up from mourning and we cast off the despair. In fact, on the fifteenth of Av - Chamisha Asar B'av - we observe a holiday whose quintessential character consists of Jewish men and women finding their mates and thus rebuilding Jewish life. And thus, the Mishna in Taanis informs us, was one of the great holidays in ancient Israel.

The message is clear. Tisha B'av commemorates tragic events. In fact it commemorates a cataclysmic event. But with it all we are here. We continue - Am Yisrael Chai - despite prosecution, despite destruction, despite tragedy.

Next week, Jews the world over will observe and remember Kristallnacht. We will remember, and we ought to remember, what the Germans did to us. Indeed, we can never forget and we ought never forget the fury unleashed by Kristallnacht. Specifically these days as revisionist "historians" try to misinterpret and falsify what happened during the Shoa, we must not only remember, we must not allow the world to forget. However, our remembrance cannot exhaust itself in just rejecting what happened in the past. Our remembrance must consist of positive action. We must live Jewishly, a more intensive Jewish life, a more intensive Jewish life style. More Jews and more Jewishness. For, as Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovitz Z"TL, former Chief Rabbi of Great Britian, said, Vayizkor HaShem Et Rachel, "And G-d remembered Rachel," does not end with the mere remembrance. After G-d having remembered, He opened Rachel's womb. The best remembrance is through Jewish living.

A Project of the National Council of Young Israel
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From: Jeffrey Gross jgross@torah.org neustadt@torah.org Weekly-halacha for 5761 Selected Halachos Relating to Parshas Chayei Sara By RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

SOAKING SOFT CONTACT LENSES ON SHABBOS

QUESTION: Is it permitted to soak soft contact lenses in a disinfecting solution or in a saline solution on Shabbos?

DISCUSSION: Recently(1), contemporary poskim were asked whether soaking soft contact lenses on Shabbos violates the forbidden Labor of Laundering. In order to better understand the problem, we must first consider the following technical information:

Soft lenses are produced from a type of plastic called polymer. During the manufacturing process, the dry plastic lens is soaked in a liquid for several hours, completely altering its shape.

Manufacturers instruct soft lenses wearers to soak their lenses each night in a disinfecting solution(2) for two reasons: 1) To rid them of dirt or tears which contain microscopic germs that are absorbed into the lenses. Tears also produce certain proteins which build up on the lenses and cloud them if they

are not cleaned on a regular basis. 2) To keep the lens soft and pliable. For this purpose, however, the lenses need only be soaked in a saline solution(3), not in a disinfecting solution.

In addition, the instructions call for gently rubbing the lenses after removing them from the soaking solution in order to remove any dirt which may collect on the surface of the lenses. Halachic background

Laundering, one of the thirty-nine forbidden Shabbos Labors, is defined as removing dirt that is either completely or partially absorbed in a fabric. There are three stages to the laundering process, each of which is prohibited: soaking [or spraying], scrubbing and wringing. The laundering phase that applies to our case of cleaning soft lenses is "soaking". There are three points regarding "soaking" which are pertinent to our discussion:

Soaking a dirty garment in water is the first stage of Laundering and is Biblically forbidden on Shabbos. But only absorbent materials are included in this prohibition. Thus leather may be soaked in water, since leather - no matter how soft - is nonabsorbent(4). Similarly, other soft non-porous materials such as soft plastic, rubber, nylon or any other synthetics which do not absorb are permitted to be soaked in water(5). Contemporary poskim rule, however, that even non-absorbent materials may not be soaked in a cleaning solution. Even though the item does not become "soaked," it is nevertheless being "laundered," since a cleaning solution will remove [all or part of] a stain(6).

The Rishonim disagree whether or not it is permitted to soak a clean garment in water if one does not intend to clean it. While the majority of the poskim are lenient, Mishnah Berurah recommends that one follow the more stringent opinions and refrain from doing so(7).

THE ISSUE

The question posed to contemporary poskim was this: How do we classify soft contact lenses - are they similar to an absorbent garment or are they more similar to a non-absorbent soft material [e.g., soft leather]? On one hand, soft lenses are made of plastic, which usually is non-porous. But as described earlier, lenses definitely do absorb liquids(8), making them very similar to a garment. If lenses are classified as a soft material, then it would be permitted to soak them in water [to keep them soft and pliable] but not in a disinfecting solution [to clean them]. If lenses are classified as a garment, then it would be prohibited to soak them in water as well(9).

An additional issue concerns the gentle rubbing of the lenses when removing them from the solution. It is questionable whether or not this is considered actual "laundering," since this action removes proteins and other dirt which are absorbed into the lenses.

THE RULING

Contemporary poskim debate this and other issues concerning soft lenses(10). They are in agreement that they may not be soaked in a disinfecting solution, as this constitutes Laundering(11). They are, however, undecided whether or not soft lenses should be classified as a garment or as soft leather. Thus they only allow soaking soft lenses in a saline solution if they have already been cleaned and they are soaking only to prevent them from hardening(12). The poskim recommend the following procedure:

1. Do not rub soft lenses clean on Shabbos. 2. Before Shabbos, the lenses should be cleaned well, using disinfecting solution and gently rubbing them with one's fingers. 3. On Shabbos, the lenses may be soaked in saline solution [so that the lenses do not harden] but not in disinfecting solution.

FOOTNOTES

1 This discussion is based on the halachic and scientific material presented in the prestigious Torah Journal Yeshurun, vol. 7, pg. 526-538 by Harav Y.M. Rubin. The halachic decisions are those of Harav Y.S. Elyashiv, Harav S. Vosner and Harav N. Karelitz.

2 Such as Alcon Opti-Free Express Multi-purpose Disinfecting Solution.

3 Which is mostly water.

4 O.C. 302:9.

5 Igros Moshe Y.D. 2:76; Tzitz Eliezer 5:10; Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasa 15:5-6.

6 Oral ruling by Harav Y.S. Elyashiv, Harav S. Vosner and Harav N. Karelitz, quoted in Yeshurun, pg. 530.

7 302:48 and Beur Halachah (s.v. sheyiesh).

8 Some brands may contain up to 70% liquid.

9 See Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasa 15:82 who permits soaking soft contact lenses in liquid so that they do not get brittle. In note 251 he explains that no prohibition of m'abed, tanning [processing], is transgressed. He does not address the issue of soaking. In an oral statement, Harav Neuwirth reports that Harav S.Z. Auerbach was not concerned with the soaking issue "since lenses only swell and puff up from the water; they do not actually absorb water as do threads in a garment". It is very likely that Harav Auerbach's decision was based on erroneous or incomplete technical information, which is why this question was re-submitted

to poskim at the present time; Yeshurun, pg. 530.

10 Hard lenses do not present an halachic problem since they do not absorb liquids. Cleaning and soaking them is similar to cleaning and soaking dishes which is clearly permitted.

11 Although it can be argued that "laundering" should not apply to all contact lenses since the dirt is not visible to the naked eye, still the poskim feel that this argument is not strong enough to permit cleaning lenses. They explain that the sensitivity of lenses is such that even small particles are significant enough to be considered real dirt, since any build up of dirt or proteins will cloud the lenses; Yeshurun, pg. 528.

12 This is based on the views that permit soaking a clean garment when there is no intent to clean it, as described earlier in point 3. Although Mishnah Berurah recommends that one be stringent and not soak even clean garments, in our case we may be lenient since soft lenses may be classified as "soft leather" and not as a "garment"; Yeshurun, ibid.

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Insights to the Daf: Nazir 22-31

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Nazir 23 AGADAH: THE SEAL OF REBBI AKIVA'S FATE The Gemara cites a Beraisa which states that Rabbi Akiva would cry when he read the verse, "Her husband annulled [her Nedarim], and Hashem will pardon her" (Bamidbar 30:13), which teaches that even if a woman tried to do an Aveirah by transgressing her Neder, but she failed to do the Aveirah because her husband already annulled the Neder without her knowledge, she still needs pardon and atonement (Selichah v'Kaparah).

Rav YOSEF ENGEL in GILYONEI HA'SHAS cites an earlier source that explains why it was specifically Rabbi Akiva who reacted in such a dramatic way to the teaching of this verse. The ARIZAL explains that the deaths of the Asarah Harugei Malchus, the ten great Tana'im tortured and executed near the time of the Churban of the second Beis ha'Mikdash, was an atonement for the sin of the ten tribes who sold Yosef to Mitzrayim (this is hinted to in a number of Piyutim composed to memorialize the Asarah Harugei Malchus). He adds that Rabbi Akiva who was the greatest among all of them, and thus his death was intended to atone for the sin of Shimon, who was the most influential one involved in the plot to sell Yosef. (His name "Akiva ben Yosef" hints that his fate was determined by what happened to Yosef.)

When the tribes asked Yosef for forgiveness after their father died (Bereishis 50:16-17), Yosef responded to them that there is nothing to forgive, explaining to them that even though they had malicious intentions when they sold him, Hashem intended it to be for the good, in order to keep the people of Yakov alive during the famine (Bereishis 50:20). (The ORACH CHAIM there points out that Yosef never actually said that he forgave them, and that is why the Asarah Harugei Malchus had to atone for the sin of the Shevatim.)

According to Yosef's response, it seems that the sin of the ten tribes for which Rabbi Akiva suffered so greatly was that they *wanted* to do evil, even though they failed in accomplishing their intent. That is why Rabbi Akiva reacted so emotionally when he read this verse, "and Hashem will pardon her," and understood that atonement is necessary even for one who merely intended to do evil. He realized that this was going to be the source for his own suffering, the seal of his own fate.

Nazir 29 THE MITZVAH OF "CHINUCH" QUESTION: TOSFOS (DH Beno) asks that if a Katan is required to observe the Mitzvos because of the Mitzvah d'Rabanan of Chinuch, how can the Gemara (Yevamos 114a) question whether Beis Din must stop a Katan from transgressing an Isur? It is obvious that they must stop him because of the obligation of Chinuch! How can Beis Din *not* be required to stop a Katan from doing an Aveirah if we are required to fulfill the Mitzvah of Chinuch?

ANSWERS: (a) The RAMBAM (Hilchos Ma'achalos Asuros 17:28, and Hilchos Avel 3:12) explains that the Gemara in Yevamos is discussing the specific obligation of *Beis Din*. Beis Din has no obligation of Chinuch for a child. The obligation of Chinuch is solely the responsibility of the child's father (or parents; see next Insight, and Insights to Chagigah 6:1). When the father is present, he certainly is obligated to stop the child from doing the Aveirah. The Gemara's question in Yevamos is whether Beis Din

must stop the child if the father is not present (or if he is present but does not stop the child himself). This is also the approach of the RI as cited by TOSFOS here and by TOSFOS YESHANIM in Yoma (82a).

(b) The RASHBA and RITVA in Yevamos, and TOSFOS in Shabbos (121a, DH Shema Mina), suggest that our Gemara is discussing a Katan who has not yet reached the age of Chinuch ("Katan she'Lo Higi'a l'Chinuch"). Regarding such a Katan -- for whom there is no obligation of Chinuch -- there is a question whether Beis Din must stop him from doing an Aveirah. The point of the question is whether an Isur is more severe than a positive Mitzvah such that we must prevent a child from doing Isurim even before he reaches the age at which we are required to instruct him to do positive Mitzvos.

Although the Ritva accepts this ruling in practice, the Rashba eventually rejects it. The Rashba cites the Gemara in Yevamos (113a) that asks that a Chareshes married to a Kohen should be allowed to eat Terumah because she is like a Katan who is not obligated to observe the Mitzvos and Beis Din is not required to stop such a person from doing an Aveirah. It seems from the Gemara there that there is no difference between a Ketanah who has reached the age of Chinuch and a Ketanah who has not reached the age of Chinuch -- in both cases, Beis Din is *not* required to stop the Ketanah from doing an Aveirah!

(The Ritva might refute this proof by differentiating between a Chareshes and a Ketanah who has reached the age of Chinuch, since a Chareshes will *never* be obligated to do Mitzvos.)

(c) TOSFOS here, and the RASHBA in Yevamos, conclude that the Gemara there is talking about a child who has reached the age of Chinuch. The reason why Chinuch does not apply to him is because the Mitzvah of Chinuch may apply only to Mitzvos Aseh. The Gemara's question is whether there is a requirement of Chinuch for Mitzvos Lo Ta'aseh as well. This is also the view of TOSFOS YESHANIM in Yoma (82a) in the name of RABEINU ELIEZER.

The reason why there should be more of an obligation of Chinuch for Mitzvos Aseh than for Mitzvos Lo Ta'aseh is because more effort is required to teach a child to do something than to teach him to refrain from doing something (see TERUMAS HA'DESHEN #94). (See also Insights to Shabbos 121:1.)

HALACHAH: The SHULCHAN ARUCH (OC 343) cites only the Rambam's opinion (a) that the father, and not Beis Din, is commanded to stop the child from sinning. The REMA cites both the opinions of the Rambam (a) and of the Ritva (b), with the Rambam's opinion as a "Yesh Omrim." (The Terumas ha'Deshen, ibid., favors the opinion of Tosfos and the Rashba (c) who differentiate between a Mitzvah Aseh and a Lo Ta'aseh.)

A MOTHER'S OBLIGATION TO BE "MECHANECH" HER CHILD QUESTION: The Gemara teaches that, according to Reish Lakish, only the father is obligated to be Mechanech his child, and not the mother, and therefore the mother cannot make her son a Nazir. This also seems to be the intention of the Gemara in Chagigah (6a; see Insights there), which says that a Katan is obligated in the Mitzvah of Aliyah l'Regel (for the sake of Chinuch) only when he is old enough to walk with his *father* to Yerushalayim. This, however, seems to contradict other Gemaras that teach that a mother is obligated in the Chinuch of her child. For example, the Gemara in Sukah (2b) relates that Hilni ha'Malkah was sitting in the Sukah with her seven sons, and she made sure that they were fulfilling the Mitzvah of sitting in a valid Sukah because of the Mitzvah d'Rabanan of Chinuch (see GILYON HA'SHAS there). How are these Gemaras to be reconciled?

ANSWERS: (a) The Rishonim explain that if the child has a father who is not present at the time, the mother is obligated to be Mechanech the child on behalf of the father (TERUMAS HA'DESHEN #94, based on TOSFOS in Erubin 82a, DH Katan; this might be the intention of TOSFOS YESHANIM in Yoma 82a -- see also Yevamos 71b, "his father and *mother* were in jail"). The ME'IRI (Nazir 29a) states, similarly, that if there is no father, then the mother is obligated to be Mechanech the child. Only when the father is alive and present does the mother not have to be Mechanech the child.

(b) RASHI (Chagigah 2a, DH Eizehu Katan) writes that the Chachamim obligated the child's *father and mother* to be Mechanech him in Mitzvos.

When the Gemara here says that a woman is not obligated in the Chinuch of her child, it is only referring to Mitzvos that are not obligatory (such as Nezirus). (The Rosh mentions a similar distinction with regard to the Gemara's statement that a father is not obligated to be Mechanech his daughter.) For such Mitzvos, the mother has no obligation to be Mechanech her child. Alternatively, Rashi in Chagigah holds that Rabbi Yochanan argues with Reish Lakish in Nazir regarding this point, and the Halachah follows the view of Rabbi Yochanan. Rabbi Yochanan holds that a woman *is* obligated in the Chinuch of her child.

Why, then, does the Gemara in Chagigah imply that the mother does not have to bring her child to Har ha'Bayis as soon as the child is able to walk with her to there (even if he is too young to walk with his father alone)? The answer is because she is only obligated to be Mechanech her son in Mitzvos in which she herself is obligated. Since she is not obligated in Aliyah l'Regel, she does not have to be Mechanech him in that Mitzvah (MENACHEM MESHIV to Chagigah 2a, citing YAD DAVID -- see Insights to Chagigah 6:1).

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