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Rav Pam on Chumash

**Rav Avraham Pam zt"l**  
PARASHAS CHAYEI SARAH  
**Priorities in Shidduchim I**

The major topic of this parashah is the lengthy description of the shidduch between Yitzchak and Rivkah. In the spirit of the famous rule of Maaseh Avos Siman Libanim it is important to carefully analyze this chapter and glean the practical lessons the Torah conveys on how to accomplish life's most important task.

The very first step in shidduchim is tefillah — heartfelt prayer. This is clearly illustrated in Avraham's instructions to Eliezer, when he appealed to "HASHEM, God of Heaven, Who took me from the house of my father and from the land of my birth," to bless Eliezer's mission with success by "sending His angel before you" (24:7).

Eliezer, too, began his mission with tefillah, saying, "HASHEM, God of my master Avraham, may You arrange it for me this day that You do kindness with my master, Avraham" (24:12). Thus, we see that one must devote great effort to tefillah and daven to Hashem, the Mezaveg Zivugim, to send one's true helpmate.

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In the search for a shidduch the first factor to consider is: What am I looking for in a wife? Avraham knew exactly what he required in a shidduch for Yitzchak. He sought a girl who was outstanding in the character trait of chesed — which Avraham himself exemplified. She would help Yitzchak perpetuate Avraham's lifework of spreading the midah of loving-kindness and thereby bringing people to belief in a Creator.

Avraham was a famous personality as well as a very rich man. He could have sought a girl who had great wealth or yichus, but these matters meant nothing to him. His only priorities were midos tovos and ahavas chesed.

We can learn from Avraham that when a person knows what he is looking for, the search for a shidduch is much easier. Once Eliezer realized that Rivkah had the qualifications Avraham required, he quickly concluded the

match. Why? What was the rush for Yitzchak to marry the first girl? Why didn't Eliezer "shop around" to see if he could find "something better"? The answer is that Eliezer knew what Avraham wanted, and if, through Hashem's kindness, he found the shidduch quickly, there was no purpose in searching for "something better." Someone who "shops around" for a shidduch, with an attitude of "Let's see what's available," usually doesn't know what he is looking for. Often there is no end to the "shopping." All that happens is that months and years pass without his finding a shidduch. He is always hesitant to come to a decision because he may find "something better."

Rav Pam would often quote his mother, Rebbetzin Rochel Leah Pam A"H who would say that one reason a chassan and kallah fast on their wedding day is to atone for the unnecessary pain and embarrassment they caused by rejecting other boys and girls due to their unrealistic expectations.

The prerequisite for finding one's shidduch is that one must know clearly what his purpose and goals in life are. If these are clear to him, then he knows what to look for in a wife. A wife is an Eizer a helpmate. How can someone look for a helpmate if he doesn't know what he needs help with? This lack of focus causes many problems. It accounts for the many dates necessary before a bachur reaches a decision. It accounts for long six to eight-hour dates which are unnecessary and improper. Many parents complain about the impropriety of a bachur bringing a girl home from a date well past midnight. This is very far from the Darchei Tzinius guidelines of modesty. Furthermore, the girl's parents often wait up for her to return and then review the date with her. The girl herself will need time to unwind from the lengthy outing. How will she be able to function at her job the next day after a nearly sleepless night?

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A ben Torah needs a helpmate who will encourage him to develop his abilities in the study of Torah and avodas Hashem. She will take upon herself the many responsibilities of the household so that her husband will have the tranquility necessary to devote himself to growth in Torah. She will feel content with a simple lifestyle because of her love of Torah. She will feel fortunate to spend her life in the pursuit of spiritual goals.

Even a bachur who does not intend to spend years in kollel should search for a wife who has a great love of Torah. She will encourage him to devote his nonworking hours to learning. She will be happy with less parnasah as long as her husband devotes his evening, Sunday and holiday hours to Torah study. She will willingly give up her own time with him to enable him to continue to grow in Torah.

Additionally, that the girl be "ah gutte baalebusta" should be a high priority; she should be able to run the home efficiently and raise the children in the proper Torah way.

The Gemara (Taanis 24a) says, "As long as a kallah's eyes are beautiful, the rest of her body need not be checked." Kli Yakar (Bereishis 24:14) questions the validity of this generalization; there are many young women with beautiful eyes who have flaws elsewhere. He explains that Chazal are not referring to physical features, but to an Ayin Tova, a "good eye" with which she looks at others. If she always sees the inherent goodness of others, seeking out their positive attributes rather than harping on their faults, this shows that she possesses beautiful midos. This is a clear, indisputable sign that she has the Kedushas Hanefesh to be a true eishes chayil who will become an Atara Libaalah, a crown to her husband.

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There are some people who have difficulty finding a shidduch because their priorities are well off the mark. They search for a match that will be "the talk of the town" and earn them the respect and envy of their friends, causing them to place great importance on famous lineage or great wealth. Others seek beauty that will impress others. Such behavior is akin to Achashveirosh's conduct; he desired to show off to the people and officials her beauty (Esther 1:11).

Another common misconception is that one should seek a girl who is extremely intelligent so that her husband can discuss lofty philosophical Torah concepts with her. This is a gross error. A bachur looking for this should go to the beis midrash and search for a chavrusa.

While the highest priority in a shidduch is the girl herself, the characters of the prospective match's family cannot be overlooked. At times it is the parents who can cause a breach in the couple's shalom bayis. Therefore it is important to ascertain what kind of people the girl's parents are. Sometimes the in-laws are kapdanim (contentious) who must always have things their way. This can certainly present difficulties to the couple. In-laws who are flexible, easy going, understanding, and desirous of making others comfortable will certainly be an asset to the couple.

In the search for a shidduch for Yitzchak, Eliezer was not concerned about Rivkah's family. He had ironclad instructions from Avraham forbidding him to return my son to there (24:6). Thus he did not have to fear the influence of Lavan on Rivkah after her marriage. In our times, when the world is so "small" — travel and communications are cheaper and easier than ever before — a bachur must take the girl's family into consideration when contemplating a shidduch. As noted above, the effects of in-laws on a marriage can be very great — for good or bad.

Rema (in his glosses to Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 240:25) rules that a son is not obligated to break off the shidduch if his father disapproves of his choice of a wife. Yet as a practical matter, he should try his utmost to choose a wife of whom his parents will approve. It is a very good sign when everyone is happy with a shidduch.

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It is important to remember that after the chasunah, the courtship must continue. The husband must treat his wife with the utmost courtesy and respect. The most common cause for the breakdown of shalom bayis is a lack of proper speech. Words can work wonders . . . and words can work horrors. During the dating process, both sides invest great care and forethought into what they say and how they say it. After the date, they review in their minds the conversations that took place and make a careful analysis: "What did she mean when she said that?" or "What did he have in mind with that remark?" One realizes that a poor impression made by a wrong word or inference might negatively affect the outcome of the shidduch. Yet, unfortunately, often this Zehirus Bidibur (care in speech) does not continue after the wedding. Speaking without thinking causes great breaches in shalom bayis.

In every marriage there are times of disagreement, but a wise spouse will avoid the temptation to get in the last word or emerge victorious from the argument. One will simply cause an escalation of the argument by responding to every comment or criticism.

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The Chofetz Chaim (Hilchos Lashon Hara 8:10) writes, "Many people err in this matter; they tell their wives about everything that happened to them in their interaction with others at work or in the beis midrash. Aside from the sin of lashon hara, this will eventually lead to machlokes, because the wife will defend her husband and react in kind, and encourage him to defend himself from those bothering him. Additionally, when she sees how her husband is treated with disrespect, she too will lose her inherent esteem for him."

Thus, while open communication between husband and wife is crucial to a successful marriage, this does not justify the violation of many serious Torah commandments. By studying the laws of lashon hara, one will know what is and what is not permitted to be shared with one's spouse.

At times, a wife loses respect for her husband when she sees that he takes lightly his obligations to learn Torah or daven with a minyan. R' Baruch Epstein (author of Torah Temimah and the nephew of R' Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin, the Netziv) writes in Mevor Baruch that his uncle was once approached by a fabulously wealthy man who complained that, despite being respected and feared by his employees and business associates, his

wife treated him with contempt. The Netziv asked about his daily schedule, and the man admitted that due to his many business concerns he rarely had time to study Torah.

The Netziv understood that although the man was powerful in the business sector and considered master in many circles, his wife looked down at him because she perceived him as a slave to his own ambitions and desire for still more money. The Netziv advised the man to set aside time for Torah study, assuring him that it would have a beneficial effect on his marriage — and so it was. Once his wife perceived that he had a purpose in life other than amassing money, her respect for him returned and their shalom bayis improved.

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Shalom bayis requires lifelong effort. This is clearly illustrated by the Torah's description of Sarah's reaction to the news that she would have a son: And Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have withered will I again have delicate skin? And my husband is old!" (Bereishis 18:12). Hashem told Avraham that she had laughed with incredulity that at her advanced age she would bear a child. Rashi says that in order to preserve harmony between Avraham and Sarah, Hashem changed the uncomplimentary reference from Avraham (my husband is old) to Sarah (I am old).

Could it be that Avraham, the epitome of chesed, would take offense at Sarah's remark that he was old? He would be the first to agree that at age 99 he was not a young man; would her remark truly be upsetting to him? The answer must be that anything which could cause even a slight breach in shalom bayis must be avoided at all costs.

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The third berachah of the Sheva Berachos mentions that the purpose of marriage is to be a Binyan Adei Ad, a building for eternity. How can marriage be for eternity if man's life span on earth is so short? The explanation may be that a couple's shidduch affects all future generations to come. Building a bayis ne'eman b'Yisrael is the very purpose of marriage. It will lead to the greatest blessing in life, which is to produce righteous children who will themselves perpetuate the eternity of Klal Yisrael. Thus, in choosing a mate for life, one must consider the everlasting nature of marriage. With fervent prayer, a person will be zocheh to find his true zivug with whom he will build his own bayis ne'eman b'Yisrael.

FN1 I. By far the most popular and widely anticipated of Rav Pam's many shiurim was his annual Parashas Chayei Sarah shmuess. He would offer his profound and yet highly practical insights into the topic of shidduchim, marriage and shalom bayis. The following is based on various points of his shmuessen from 1982-1989. See also The Pleasant Way, pp. 42-29.

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### **A Journey of a Thousand Miles**

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

Our parsha contains the most serene description of old age and dying anywhere in the Torah: "Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people" (Gen. 25:8). There is an earlier verse, no less moving: "Abraham was old, well advanced in years, and God had blessed Abraham with everything" (Gen. 24:1).

Nor was this serenity the gift of Abraham alone. Rashi was puzzled by the description of Sarah — "Sarah lived to be 127 years old: [These were] the years of Sarah's life" (23:1). The last phrase seems completely superfluous. Why not just tell us that Sarah lived to the age of 127? What is added by saying that "these were the years of Sarah's life"? Rashi is led to the conclusion that the first half of the verse talks about the quantity of her life, how long she lived, while the second tells us about the quality of her life. "They — the years she lived — were all equal in goodness."

Yet how is any of this conceivable? Abraham and Sarah were commanded by God to leave everything that was familiar: their land, their home, their family, and travel to an unknown land. No sooner had they arrived than they were forced to leave because of famine. Twice, Abraham's life was at risk when, driven into exile, he worried that he would be killed so that the local ruler could take Sarah into his harem. Sarah herself had to say that she was Abraham's sister, and had to suffer the indignity of being taken into a stranger's household.

Then there was the long wait for a child, made even more painful by the repeated Divine promise that they would have as many children as the stars of the sky or the dust of the earth. Then came the drama of the birth of Ishmael to Sarah's servant Hagar. This aggravated the relationship between the two women, and eventually Abraham had to send Hagar and Ishmael away. One way or another, this was a source of pain to all four people involved.

Then there was the agony of the binding of Isaac. Abraham was faced with the prospect of losing the person most precious to him, the child he had waited for so long.

For a variety of reasons, neither Abraham nor Sarah had an easy life. Theirs were lives of trial, in which their faith was tested at many points. How can Rashi say that all of Sarah's years were equal in goodness? How can the Torah say that Abraham had been blessed with everything?

The answer is given by the parsha itself, and it is very unexpected. Seven times Abraham had been promised the land. Here is just one of those occasions:

The Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Raise your eyes, and, from the place where you are now [standing], look to the north, to the south, to the east, and to the west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. . . . Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you" (Gen. 13:14-17).

Yet by the time Sarah dies, Abraham has no land at all, and he is forced to prostrate himself before the local Hittites and beg for permission to acquire even a single field with a cave in which to bury his wife. Even then he has to pay what is clearly a massively inflated price: four hundred silver shekels. This does not sound like the fulfillment of the promise of "all the land, north, south, east and west."

Then, in relation to children, Abraham is promised four times: "I will make you into a great nation" (12:2). "I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth" (13:16). God "took [Abram] outside and said, 'Look at the sky and count the stars. See if you can count them.' [God] then said to him, 'That is how [numerous] your descendants will be.'" (15:5). "No longer shall you be called Abram. Your name shall become Abraham, for I have set you up as the father of many nations" (17:5).

Yet he had to wait so long for even a single son by Sarah that when God insisted that she would indeed have a son, both Abraham (17:17) and Sarah (18:12) laughed. (The sages differentiated between these two episodes, saying that Abraham laughed with joy, Sarah with disbelief. In general, in Genesis, the verb *tz-ch-k*, to laugh, is fraught with ambiguity).

One way or another, whether we think of children or the land – the two key Divine promises to Abraham and Sarah – the reality fell far short of what they might have felt entitled to expect.

That, however, is precisely the meaning and message of Chayei Sarah. In it Abraham does two things: he buys the first plot in the land of Canaan, and he arranges for the marriage of Isaac. One field and a cave was, for Abraham, enough for the text to say that "God had blessed Abraham with everything." One child, Isaac, by then married and with children (Abraham was 100 when Isaac was born; Isaac was sixty when the twins, Jacob and Esau, were born; and Abraham was 175 when he died) was enough for Abraham to die in peace.

Lao-Tzu, the Chinese sage, said that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. To that Judaism adds, "It is not for you to complete the work but neither are you free to desist from it" (Avot 2:16). God Himself

said of Abraham, "For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what He has promised him" (Gen. 18:19).

The meaning of this is clear. If you ensure that your children will continue to live for what you have lived for, then you can have faith that they will continue your journey until eventually they reach the destination. Abraham did not need to see all the land in Jewish hands, nor did he need to see the Jewish people become numerous. He had taken the first step. He had begun the task, and he knew that his descendants would continue it. He was able to die serenely because he had faith in God and faith that others would complete what he had begun. The same was surely true of Sarah.

To place your life in God's hands, to have faith that whatever happens to you happens for a reason, to know that you are part of a larger narrative, and to believe that others will continue what you began, is to achieve a satisfaction in life that cannot be destroyed by circumstance. Abraham and Sarah had that faith, and they were able to die with a sense of fulfillment.

To be happy does not mean that you have everything you want or everything you were promised. It means, simply, to have done what you were called on to do, to have made a beginning, and then to have passed on the baton to the next generation. "The righteous, even in death, are regarded as though they were still alive" (Berakhot 18a) because the righteous leave a living trace in those who come after them.

That was enough for Abraham and Sarah, and it must be enough for us.

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From: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org> to: weeklydt@torahweb2.org  
subject: TorahWeb **TorahWeb.org**.

**Rabbi Mordechai Willig**  
**Tying All Jews Together**

I "Avraham took a wife whose name was Keturah" (Breishis 25:1). This is Hagar, but she is called Keturah because her deeds were as beautiful as ketores (incense), and because she tied (*kashra*) her entrance, as she did not have relations with any man from the day she separated from Avra" (Rashi). The Mizrahi says "Keturah refers to 'katra', which is Aramaic for 'kashra', tied" (Mizrahi).

It makes sense that ketores is etymologically connected to katar - tying, since the ketores represents tying all Jews together. We see this when the gemara (Kerisus 6b) says, "Any fast day that does not include the sinners is not a fast" and cites two proofs: first, that the foul-smelling *chelbana* (*galabanum*) is among the spices of the ketores, and second, that the navi (Amos 9:6) says, "Va'agudaso (when they are all tied together, Rashi) [then] He founded the earth." Once again we see that ketores is connected to tying.

On Yom Kippur the ketores was ground into especially thin particles (*daka min ha'daka*, *ibid*). This signifies that on the unique Torah fast day, all Jews must be enmeshed in even greater closeness. Yom Kippur is a "day of love and friendship, a day without jealousy and competition" (Mussaf). We begin Yom Kippur, right before Kol Nidrei, by allowing sinners, even those who are banned for the rest of the year, to join the community in prayer, as the ketores teaches.

The plague in the aftermath of Korach's rebellion was stopped by the ketores (Bamidbar 17:12, 13). The people had complained that the ketores is a deadly poison, since through it Nadav and Avihu and two hundred and fifty people died. Hashem said, "You will see that the ketores stops a plague and sin is what kills" (Rashi).

The sin that kills is *machlokes* - quarrelling, an act prohibited so as not to follow the behavior of Korach and his group (17:5, see Sanhedrin 110a). Moshe warned them (Rashi 16:16), "The ketores is the most beloved offering, but it contains a deadly ingredient. We have one Hashem, one Ark, one Torah, one Altar, and one Kohen Gadol." Despite the warning, Korach and the two hundred and fifty people offered an unauthorized ketores and

perished, just like Nadav and Avihu. The deadly sin was separation from the community which is the precise opposite of the purpose of ketores, i.e. to tie all Jews together.

The ketores is beloved, and lifesaving, when Jews come together. Just as a parent's most fervent wish is that his children get along, so, as it were, it is Hashem's desire that we, His children, do so, and this unity will lead to our redemption. Thus the ketores is offered for nachas ru'ach (Metzudos, Yechezkel 20:40), paralleling a parent's nachas from his unified children.

This expression "one Hashem" in Rashi is puzzling. Why is machlokes a denial of Hashem? The answer lies in the idea expressed by the Sefer HaChinuch (241), that one who seeks revenge assumes that another person wronged him. In reality, however, it was Hashem who decreed that he suffer, and he should not seek revenge, which, in effect, denies Hashem's providence. Korach and his group, who fought for a status that Hashem gave to others, were also deniers of "one Hashem".

On Yom Kippur, the day that our one Kohen Gadol approached the one Ark and the one Altar and served the one Hashem based on the one Torah, the extra-thin ketores represents unity and inclusion. Kol Nidrei, which begins by allowing sinners to join in, concludes with a declaration that the entire nation is forgiven; they were misguided by serious rabbinic error (the Sanhedrin allowed an action which turned out to be avodah Zara), and their sin is deemed unintentional (Bamidbar 15:24-26). The implication for the sinners of our generation is clear and powerful.

The ketores is unique, separated from the rest of the offerings. The Netziv (Shemos 30:1) explains that ketores atones for lashon hara (Yoma 44a), the most serious interpersonal sin. Its main purpose is to accentuate gemilus chasadim, which is represented by Shilo (ibid 39b). While the other offerings were based on the Torah, which emerges from Yerushalayim (Tziyon), the ketores of Shilo actually merged with its idolatrous counterpart. Hashem accepted it because of the hospitality of Pesel Micha (Sanhedrin 103b). The value of interpersonal propriety, even in the absence of Torah, and even tainted by idolatry, may not be diminished.

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The tying together of all Jews is found in the Medrash (Vayikra Raba 30:12) as well, which says that the four species represent four types of Jews: the esrog has taste and smell, as some Jews have Torah and good deeds (ma'asim tovim); the lulav has taste but not smell, as some Jews have Torah but no good deeds; the hadasim have smell but no taste, as some Jews have good deeds but no Torah; the aravos have neither taste nor smell, as some Jews have neither Torah nor good deeds. Hashem said "let them all be tied (yuksheru) into one bundle, and these atone for those." The command to take for ourselves (lachem) the four species means tie ourselves together.

The Etz Yosef interprets "massim tovim" in the aforementioned Medrash to be mitzvos. He asks since Torah is more abstract than mitzvos, shouldn't Torah be compared to the abstract smell rather than the physical taste? More troubling is the following question: what value does Torah have if the person does not perform its mitzvos? We must conclude that mitzvos are included in Torah. What, then, are ma'asim tovim?

The answer is that good deeds must be taken literally. Any act of kindness, of charity, of supporting charitable institutions of all types are ma'asim tovim. Again, the implication of this redefinition is enormous. The vast majority of non-observant Jews, according to the Etz Yosef, have neither Torah nor ma'asim tovim. According to our interpretation, nearly all have ma'asim tovim. Generally, secular Jews are far more charitable and concerned about social justice than non-Jews. As the Netziv notes, non-Torah, and even anti-Torah enterprises can contain gemilus chasadim of value.

The Etz Yosef, citing the Vilna Gaon, requires that those with neither Torah nor ma'asim tovim identify as Jews and as a part of the Jewish community. By denying idolatry, they acknowledge the entire Torah (Chulin 5a) and should be tied together with observant Jews. A significant majority of secular Jews meet these criteria.

Nonetheless, the proper practice of ma'asim tovim is far less defined than Torah and mitzvos. Some charities and social justice agendas are incompatible with Torah observance and/or values. Hence, ma'asim tovim are compared to the more abstract smell, while the more defined Torah and mitzvos are compared to taste.

The Etz Yosef, quoting the Radal, notes that the esrog is not tied with the three other species. So, too, a talmid chacham should be near all other Jews, but remain somewhat apart. In our analysis, all observant and ethical Jews have Torah and ma'asim Tovim, and, together with talmidei chachamim, are represented by the esrog. They should remain somewhat apart from the non-observant and the unethical.

As we read about Keturah, we should beautify our deeds like the ketores and tie ourselves together with all identifying Jews, bringing nachas, as it were, to Hashem and, by eliminating sinas chinam, which caused the churban, merit the ultimate redemption.

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**By Rabbi Yair Hoffman**

**Rav Dovid Feinstein's Rulings On Hundreds Of Issues**

Rav Dovid Feinstein, shlita Rav Dovid Feinstein, shlita Sefer Review By Rabbi Yair Hoffman

The second volume of V'dibarta Bam with the p'sakim of Moreinu HaRav Dovid Feinstein, shlita, has just been released. It is authored by Rav Boruch Moskowitz, shlita, who learns with the rosh yeshiva every morning. There is no question that this sefer is a "must have" and the first printing will certainly be sold out in a matter of a few weeks of its arrival in the sefarim stores.

For the first time, Rav Dovid Feinstein's halachic views on hundreds of topics are heard in an in-depth treatment.

The sefer has 221 topics in close to 600 tightly packed pages. Each siman deals with a topic with great depth and then provides Rav Dovid Feinstein's view on the subject matter. Much of the material deals with understanding Rav Moshe Feinstein's opinion in his Igros Moshe.

Dayan Roth's Remarriage

There was an article a short while back about Dayan Yechezkel Roth who was attached to a heart-lung machine and for a while, he was not technically "living." Subsequently, it was reported that he had remarried his wife, just in case his temporary death severed the legality of his marriage. Reb Dovid, shlita, (Siman 306) opines that when one does undergo such a temporary death, there is no need to remarry. He also states that one is not technically obligated to perform heroic lifesaving measures to one who is technically dead. Rav Dovid's opinion in this particular siman seems to be a rather controversial one.

Maisis And Lifnei Iver

In Siman 155, the Igros Moshe (OC Vol. I #99) regarding "Maisis" on other mitzvos is discussed. According to many other authorities, there is another prohibition aside from Lifnei Iver, which is violated when one specifically requests another individual to perform a sin. This prohibition is called Maisis. The verse in Devarim (13:7) states: "If your brother shall entice you . . . saying let us go serve other gods. . . ." The Torah then continues to explain the punishment of such an individual. The traditional understanding of this prohibition is that it is limited to one who entices another to worship idols.

Rav Moshe writes that this prohibition of enticing another person applies to all sins, not only to idol worship. He maintains that the capital punishment is strictly reserved for the idol-worship form of enticement, but the prohibition of enticement applies to all sins.

Rabbi Feinstein thus censures a synagogue for encouraging people to attend their programming or their religious services on the Shabbos if they would arrive by car. He writes that the rabbi who invited them would be in violation of both Lifnei Iver as well as Maisis. [It seems from Rabbi

Feinstein's language and tone that the violation of Maisis is actually more serious than that of Lifnei Iver.]

Rabbi Moskowitz explains why the issue of kiruv rechokim is not relevant in Rav Feinstein's analysis and why one cannot allow for violating halachah for this purpose. In the end of the Siman, Rabbi Moskowitz cites Rav Dovid Feinstein's view that there is no leniency to invite someone on Shabbos. As a parenthetical note, Rav Feinstein, zt'l, was not the first to mention the prohibition of Maisis. It is also found in both the Chavas Yair §166 and the Shvus Yaakov Vol III §178.

**Do You Make A Shehecheyanu When Purchasing A New Sefer?**

Generally speaking, mitzvos are not given l'hanos, so we do not recite blessings on a new sefer. But when it genuinely brings us joy, perhaps one should. In Siman 44, he cites Rav Dovid Feinstein that if the purchase of the sefer brings much joy, a Shehecheyanu may be said.

**Shehecheyanu On Fruits**

A few years ago, a ruling from Rav Elyashiv, zt'l, spread, that no Shehecheyanu is recited on new fruits since, nowadays, on account of imports from various other countries, most fruits are available 12 months out of the year. Reb Dovid, lbc'l is cited in Siman 45 as agreeing with this ruling; however, he states that if there is a 30-day break when the fruit is not available, the blessing can be recited if one is excited about it.

**Psik Reisha Through A Gentile**

In Siman 90, the author points to somewhat of a contradiction within the Mishnah Berurah (276:30 versus 253:99) regarding a psik reisha of a biblical prohibition, a secondary result of a primary action, when done through a gentile—amirah l'akum. He cites Rav Dovid Feinstein as ruling that it is permitted when done through a gentile and that the fact that the Mishnah Berurah was stringent in 276 is because of a separate issue of having muktzah moved. An issue not raised by the author is that 253:99 is actually an amalgamation of two different Acharonim in the words of the Rema (the Vilna Gaon and the Magen Avraham)—neither of whom would have come to the same conclusion that the Mishnah Berurah came to regarding biblical prohibitions on account of their own readings. It would have been interesting to hear Rav Dovid's view on this.

**Operations To Extend Life Temporarily**

Rav Moshe, zt'l, deals with the issue of whether a severely ill person must undergo an operation that will only extend his life somewhat (IM CM II #74). He writes that if the sick person does not have the energy or strength to do so, he has the right to not undergo the operation. Rav Dovid, shlita, added (Siman 304) that if it is impossible to ascertain the ill person's thinking on the subject, the relatives must try to figure out what the ill person would want.

All in all, the sefer is a remarkable contribution to our understanding of halachah and specifically to Reb Dovid's halachic views. It is a must-purchase for those who wish to hear the view of one of Klal Yisrael's greatest gedolim. The sefer is available at Biegeleisen in Boro Park and at other fine sefarim stores. v

Rabbi Hoffman can be reached at Yairhoffman2@gmail.com.

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

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from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com>  
reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com  
subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

**Weekly Parsha CHAYEI SARAH Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog**

Our matriarchs of Israel were very strong personalities and were formidable women. The life experiences of our mother Sarah are an excellent example of this assessment of character and behavior. From the Torah narrative we are informed early on that she is infertile, unable to conceive and give birth

naturally. Nevertheless, we do not hear despair from her. She is willing to bring another woman into her house and to share her husband, so to speak, with that woman in the hope that this would somehow facilitate her own becoming pregnant. Having Hagar in her home and watching her arrogant behavior forces her to chastise Avraham's attitude towards this complex relationship. She takes action to bring Hagar in line and thus preserve the primacy of her relationship to Avraham. Having escaped from the clutches of the Pharaoh and being aware of the dangers facing a beautiful woman in a cruel and violent society, she nonetheless continues her life's mission of advancing monotheism and morality in a surrounding society that condones evil and violent paganism. She is wondrously shocked, almost to disbelief, when informed by a stranger who appears as a Bedouin Arab that she will conceive and bear a son to Avraham. At that moment she realizes that she will not only become an "ordinary" mother but rather the matriarchal figure that will preside over an eternal people that will influence all future societies.

To protect and safeguard that eternity, she is forced to expel Yishmael from her home. She does not flinch or flag at performing this distasteful task. In this respect, she is stronger than Avraham, and Heaven, so to speak, backs up her position. She is the woman of iron that acts to guarantee the future survival of the Jewish people. Sarah serves as the paradigm for the matriarchs that follow her in the Torah narrative of the book of Bereshith. Rivka is certainly the strong force in the house of Yitzchak who recognizes the darkness of Eisav in comparison to the heavenly potential of Yaakov. She shows strength in having to do family triage, so to speak, and knowingly to accept the consequences of such a painful and agonizing decision. The ability and strength that she exhibits, in switching her husband's blessings from the older son to the younger one, is indicative of the certainty of commitment and clarity of vision that so characterized all of the matriarchs of the people of Israel. Sarah lived on in Rivka and her life's decisions. The same thing is true regarding Rachel and Leah who are more aware of the nefarious and dangerous ways of their father Lavan than is their husband Yaakov. It is they who finally force Yaakov to heed the Heavenly voice that directs him to leave Aram and return home to the Land of Israel. Again it is the strength of character and will that decides the ultimate issue, and it is that decision that tips the scales of eternity in favor of Jewish survival. If Chava is recorded as being the mother of all living things, it is Sarah who is the mother of the loving, vibrant and eternal people of Israel. Shabbat shalom  
Rabbi Berel Wein

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from: Rabbi Yochanan Zweig <genesis@torah.org>

to: rabbizweig@torah.org

subject: Rabbi Zweig

**Parshas Chayei Sarah Rav Yochanan Zweig DIVINE PROTECTION**

The servant took ten camels, of his master's camels, and went with all the bounty of his master... (24:10). Rashi (ad loc) seems bothered by this possuk as it should be obvious that Eliezer would have only taken the camels that belonged to his master; why should the Torah identify them as belonging to Avraham? Rashi goes on to explain that Avraham's camels were unique and easily distinguished from other camels - "because his camels were always muzzled to prevent them from stealing by grazing in fields belonging to others."

Similarly, later in the narrative the Torah says that upon reaching their final destination "he (Eliezer) unfastened the camels," and Rashi reiterates that this is referring to the muzzles that the camels were wearing (24:34).

Ramban (ad loc) disagrees and says that the "unfastening" mentioned in the possuk either refers to releasing the camels' saddles, or to untying the camels from each other, which was the custom when traveling with many animals.

Ramban contends that it is impossible that the camels of Avraham Avinu needed muzzles to prevent them from stealing. He goes on to prove this from the well-known Talmudic maxim that Hashem prevents the animals of the

righteous from sinning: We find several stories (Talmud Yerushalmi Dmai 1:3 and Talmud Bavli Chulin 7a-7b) involving the donkey of Pinchas Ben Yair whereby the animal refused to consume food which wasn't halachically appropriate to eat. In one of those stories the donkey, which had been stolen from its master, actually refused to eat for three days straight because the feed offered hadn't been properly tithed.

Ramban therefore makes a fortiori argument; if Hashem prevented the donkey of Pinchas Ben Yair from sinning, how is it possible that He would permit the camels of Avraham to steal by grazing in other people's fields? Ramban thus concludes that the animals of Avraham didn't need muzzles.

In a similar vein, we find a Tosefta (Shabbos 12b) which explains that the reason one is forbidden to read by candlelight on Friday night is because you may come to adjust the light (which may lead to a forbidden act on Shabbos). R' Yishmael Ben Elisha said, "I will read by the candlelight and not adjust it." R' Nasan said that when R' Yishmael tried it he ended up adjusting the light: He therefore proclaimed "I, Yishmael son of Elisha, read by the light and adjusted it. When the Beis Hamikdash will be rebuilt I will bring a sacrifice for atonement." However, Tosfos (ad loc) questions: If Hashem protects the animals of the righteous from inadvertent sinning, how much more so must he protect the righteous themselves! In other words, why didn't Hashem prevent R' Yishmael from sinning?

We learn here a fascinating concept: one that provides us with a deep philosophical insight. Obviously, being a tzaddik requires one to act in a righteous manner. However, Hashem doesn't act in order to keep people righteous by preventing them from doing something wrong - that would run counter to purpose of allowing people to raise themselves to righteousness.

Therefore, the only time Hashem prevents a tzaddik from inadvertently committing a forbidden act is when he takes every precaution to avoid such a situation. In other words, Hashem helps the righteous avoid the pain of doing something wrong by protecting them when they have already done everything in their power to prevent sinning. The great R' Yishmael Ben Elisha felt that he would be able to resist the temptation of adjusting the candles - in such a situation Hashem wouldn't act to prevent him from violating Shabbos if R' Yishmael failed to control himself. This would also answer Ramban's question on Rashi. Avraham had to muzzle his animals because he has to do everything in his power to make sure they wouldn't steal. But if, for example, a strap broke and the muzzle fell off, in such a situation Hashem would step in to prevent Avraham Avinu's animals from stealing. This is because Avraham would have done everything reasonably in his power to prevent such a situation from occurring. In this case, Hashem would then forestall the pain to Avraham caused by his animals grazing in another's field. Hashem doesn't keep people righteous; He prevents the righteous from getting hurt. LAVAN'S MARRIAGE ADVICE

They blessed Rifkah, "our sister may you come to be thousands of myriads..." (24:60) Upon departing her family to travel to meet her husband to be, Rifkah is given a blessing by her mother, and brother Lavan. Remarkably, this blessing has become the standard Jewish custom for blessing ones' daughter on their wedding day. For thousands of years, Jewish fathers have used these exact words to bless their daughters on their wedding day during the bedeken (veiling ceremony).

One has to wonder - what is so remarkable about this blessing that it has become the standard blessing that Jewish fathers have used, word for word, to confer a blessing to their daughters on this most precious day? Not the least of the difficulties is the source of this blessing; Lavan is considered a very wicked and amoral individual who singlehandedly tried to wipe out the future of the Jewish people.

If we are going to use Lavan's words, one would at least expect him to have said something deeply insightful or particularly moving. But his "blessing" seems pedestrian, at best, and yet this is the blessing that a father gives his daughter on one of the most meaningful days of their lives. What special message is being conveyed?

Targum Yonasan Ben Uziel translates this blessing in an unusual manner: "Until now you were our sister, now you are going to be taken (in marriage) to that righteous man. May it be Hashem's will that thousands of myriads will come from you." Why does the Targum Yonasan add the piece about being taken in marriage to the righteous Yitzchak, where does he see an indication of that in the possuk?

The Targum is bothered by the word in the verse meaning "may you come to be." The blessing from Rifkah's family should have merely been "may you give birth to thousands of myriads." The incredible insight given to Rifkah by her family is that marriage is a transformative experience. You may have left as our sister but you are now "becoming" united with a righteous man. You, Rifkah, are going to have a new identity, and this is a recreation of who you are.

This is the very message a father is supposed to give his daughter. Marriage isn't merely moving from where you grew up into another home. Marriage creates a new entity, and that entity will "become" thousands of myriads because a proper marriage transcends the two individuals and creates a greater "one."

This blessing is the very definition of what marriage is, and this is why almost every single one of the Sheva Brachos relates to either creation or Gan Eden. The message that we convey to the bride and groom on their wedding day is that they are being transformed into a new entity.

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from: Mordechai Tzion toratravaviner@yahoo.com

to: ravaviner@yahooogroups.com

<http://www.ravaviner.com/>

Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

From the teachings of the Rosh Yeshiva

Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner Shlit"a

**Rav Shlomo Aviner Shlit"a**

Children of Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Q: How is it possible that Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah did not have children? A: We do not know the secrets of the Creator. Ha-Or Ha-Chaim Ha-Kadosh also did not have children, and it is told that he exerted all of his efforts, which he would have used for raising children, into his commentary on the Torah. And Rabbi Meir of Lublin also did not have children, but considered his Yeshiva, Chachmei Lublin, and those who learn Daf Yomi to be his two "children". So too, Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah had two children: his Yeshiva, Mercaz Ha-Rav, and Klal Yisrael (the same can also be said of the Rebbe of Lubavitch who also did not have children). Visiting Rabbi's Grave Q: There is a Rav who I greatly admire. Is it worthwhile to visit his grave? A: It is better to learn his books. Wedding Ring for Men Q: Is it permissible for a man to wear a wedding ring, or is it forbidden on account of "Lo Yilbash" (the prohibition of men dressing like women) and "Chukot Ha-Goyim" (following non-Jewish customs)? A: . There is no issue of "Lo Yilbash", as long it is not a woman's ring. There is also no issue of "Chukot Ha-Goyim", since there is no such law among the non-Jews regarding wedding rings. Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein writes that there is no issue of "Chukot Ha-Goyim" since the ring is ornamental and symbolizes that he is married. He adds that perhaps it is an ugly custom for a G-d-fearing Jews, but it is not forbidden. Shut Igrot Moshe, Even Ha-Ezer 4:32 #2. The definition of an "ugly" custom is according to the time and place. There are Sefardic men who wear a wedding ring, and some Ashkenazim as well (Ha-Rav Nissim Karelitz also permits it in his book "Peat Zekanecha" #102. So too, Shut Or Le-Tzion 2:23 #11 and Shut Aseh Lecha Rav, Volume 5 p. 386).

Ascending onto the Temple Mount Q: Is it permissible to ascend onto the Temple Mount? A: No. It is a transgression. There are signs there that the Chief Rabbinate of Israel forbids it. Q: But some say that the Chief Rabbinate does not decide for all of Am Yisrael and its decisions are political? A: Now you have two transgressions. Talmud or Gemara Q: What is the true name – Talmud or Gemara? A: Talmud. For example, Babylonian

Talmud, Jerusalem Talmud, Talmud Torah. Gemara is an expression forced upon us by the censor.

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from: Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>  
to: weekly@ohr.edu  
subject: Torah Weekly

***Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Chayei Sara For the week ending 26 November 2016 / 25 Heshvan 5777 by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com Insights The Kiss of Life "And Avraham rose from before the face of his dead (Sarah)" (23:2)***

We tend to think Sarah's burial in the Cave of Machpelah, the resting place of Adam and Chava, is a forgone conclusion, and all Avraham had to do was to pay — albeit vastly over the market value — for the right to bury her there.

However, someone whose life is taken by the Angel of Death may not be buried there, only someone who passes from this world by a Heavenly kiss. "And Avraham rose from before the face of his dead." (23:2)

The word "face" in this verse seems redundant. Why didn't the Torah just say, "And Avraham rose from in front of his dead?"

In Sarah's face, Avraham saw the story of her death.

The Talmud (Avoda Zara 20b) describes how the Angel of Death takes someone from this world: He hovers over the head of the dying person with his sword drawn. The dying person is so terrified by the sight of the Angel of Death that he involuntarily opens his mouth, into which the Angel of Death lets fall three drops from his sword; one drop kills the person, one causes his body to decay, and the other turns his face green.

Avraham was not present when Sarah died, but he could see that she was worthy to be buried in the Cave of Machpela because her face still had the unchanged natural color that it had during her life. *Source: Rabbi Yonatan Eibeschutz © 2016 Ohr Somayach International*

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[http://www.ou.org/torah/author/Rabbi\\_Dr\\_Tzvi\\_Hersh\\_Weinreb](http://www.ou.org/torah/author/Rabbi_Dr_Tzvi_Hersh_Weinreb)

from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org>

reply-to: shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

***OU Torah Parsha Chayei Sarah: Sarah, Esther, and the Sleepy Students Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb***

Jews live their lives within the framework of the Jewish calendar. At this time of year, we identify strongly with the narratives contained in the weekly Torah portions that we read in the synagogue. Our thoughts are with the biblical characters of the current parshiyot. We live in the company of Abraham and Sarah, Lot, Hagar and Ishmael, and Isaac and Rebecca.

If we are not thinking of the heroes and villains of the parsha of the week, we have an alternative. We can turn our thoughts to the recent holidays or to the ones which we shall soon celebrate. The holiday of Succoth is now part of the rapidly fading past, so we might be thinking of Chanukah, which is but a few weeks away. We are certainly not yet thinking of Purim.

The list of biblical heroines whose stories delight our children and inspire us at this time of year does not yet include Queen Esther. In this week's Torah portion, Parshat Chayei Sarah (Genesis 23:1-25:18), we do encounter two queenly women. We mourn the death of the matriarch Sarah, and we admire Rebecca's ability to live up to the spiritual standards of the mother-in-law she never met.

But Esther? There is neither trace nor hint of her existence.

So why would I be writing about Esther at this time of year? Purim is still many months away, and there are other female role models in the current Torah portions. Even Chanukah, which occurs much sooner than Purim, features feminine heroines such as Yehudit. Where does Esther shine in?

For the answer let us turn to the Midrash and to that singular sage, Rabbi Akiva. We know that Rabbi Akiva lived a remarkable life, underwent many changes, became a preeminent Torah scholar, and died a martyr.

The Midrash introduces us to Rabbi Akiva in reference to the very first verse in this week's Torah portion. It is a verse which seems to require no exegesis. The verse simply says, "Sarah's lifetime—the span of Sarah's life— came to one hundred and

twenty-seven years." What further explanation or commentary is necessary? She lived a long and productive life. What more is there to say?

To answer this question, we must remember that Rabbi Akiva was, first and foremost, a teacher. Like every teacher, he had a difficult task. Some students paid attention to Rabbi Akiva's lectures some of the time, but few, if any, listened attentively to every lecture. Like every teacher before and since, Rabbi Akiva had to devise methods to gain the attention of his disciples.

And so, the Midrash takes us into Rabbi Akiva's classroom. We really should consider this quite a privilege, for there are very few opportunities given in rabbinic literature to actually enter the classroom of one of our sages, let alone a sage as prominent as Rabbi Akiva.

Here is the Midrashic passage: "Rabbi Akiva was sitting and expounding Torah. His audience fell asleep. He tried to awaken them, and said, 'What motivated Queen Esther to reign over one hundred and twenty and seven provinces? We must assume that Esther, as a descendant of Sarah who lived for one hundred and twenty and seven years, considered it proper to reign over one hundred and twenty and seven provinces.'" (Bereshit Rabbah 58:3)

What are we to learn from this cryptic passage? To those of us who are teachers, there is a measure of comfort to be derived from learning that Rabbi Akiva too had difficulty maintaining the attention of his students. We also learn that his students were fully aware of the role that the number 127 plays both in the book of Genesis and in the book of Esther. We can assume that there is something about Rabbi Akiva's mention of this coincidence that awakened the sleepy classroom. But surely there is a much more profound lesson to be learned here.

Many commentators have searched for this deeper meaning. They point out that Sarah's life was a very full one, and at every stage she displayed the vigor of the seven-year-old child, the idealism of the twenty-year-old, and the wisdom of the aged centenarian. No moment went to waste. She led an active life, overcame numerous frustrations and obstacles, and prevailed. Her life was the paradigm of a life of meaning and accomplishment.

If there is a lesson to be learned from her life, it is that every year is valuable, and so is every month and every week and every day and every hour. If we are to translate 127 years into 127 provinces, then each year is an entire province, each month a region, each week a city, each day a neighborhood, each hour a street, each minute a building, and every second an entire room.

If one allows himself a second of slumber, he forfeits a room. If one sleeps for a week, he loses an entire city. Every segment of time represents a significant opportunity, and with every wasted moment opportunities are lost.

This is Rabbi Akiva's lesson to his sleepy students. "You're not merely dozing off and enjoying idle daydreams. You are wasting time, killing time, and in the process losing opportunities which will not present themselves again. If you miss a moment of a Torah lecture, you create a void that can never again be filled."

Rabbi Akiva's lesson is a lesson to all of us. In contemporary terms, it is a lesson about time management. Time is a gift, but it is an ephemeral gift. A moment lost can never be retrieved.

But Rabbi Akiva insists that this is not his lesson, but Sarah's lesson. It is the legacy that she left for her descendants. Queen Esther grasped that legacy. She did not assume the role of a passive queen, but actively reigned over all of her 127 provinces. She studied their needs, recognized their individual differences, and helped each of them best utilize their unique resources. As Grandmother Sarah valued each and every one of her years, so too did Esther value every one of her many provinces.

So must we all learn to utilize all of our blessings to the fullest, whether they be the blessing of longevity or the blessing of political power, the blessing of wealth or the blessing of grandchildren. Living a full life means appreciating all of our blessings and making the most of them.

What wonderful teachers we have had, and how differently and creatively they taught us these lessons. Sarah taught them in the context of the family tent. Esther taught them from her royal palace. Rabbi Akiva taught them from his classroom lectern.

Whatever our place in life, following their lessons will lead to a life of meaning and purpose, the kind of life for which we all strive.

Thus, although this week's Torah portion carries Sarah's name in its very title, she would be the first to make room for her progeny, Esther, to join her in teaching her lesson to us. Esther too has a place in Parshas Chayei Sarah.

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from: Rabbi Yissocher Frand <ryfrand@torah.org>

reply-to: ryfrand@torah.org,

to: ravfrand@torah.org

subject: Rabbi Frand on Parsha

**Rabbi Yissocher Frand Parshas Chayei Sarah Looking Our Age / The Shidduch Crisis**

**In The “Olden Days” (Before Avraham) People Did Not Get Old**

There is an interesting Medrash in Parshas Chayei Sarah: On the pasuk “And Avraham was old, coming in days...” [Bereshis 24:1] the Medrash points out that Avraham asked for (signs of) old age. Avraham Avinu was the first person in the history of the world to “get old” and the Medrash says he in fact asked to “show his age”.

His argument was that a man and his son (who would look like each other and both would appear to be young and vigorous) would come together to a new place and the townspeople would not know to whom to give more honor and respect. In our world, we have many cases where fathers and sons look alike, but it is very obvious as to whom is the father and whom is the son. The individual who is wider around the waist and white in the beard and the head, the one with more wrinkles on his skin – he is the father. Avraham and Yitzchak had a problem. They looked alike and they both had black beards and their skin was the same.

The Almighty told Avraham that his request was a reasonable one. “By your life, this phenomenon will begin with you!” From the beginning of the Torah until Parshas Chayei Sarah the Torah does not use the word ziknah [old age], until this parsha where we read “And Avraham was old...”.

This request for “old age” and G-d’s concurrence, as it were, that it is a good idea runs counter to the mindset that we have today. Today, people do not want to get old, they don’t want to look old. People spend billions of dollars in order to remain and to look young. They use face lifts, cosmetic surgery, Grecian formula or Botox injections. People spend a lot of money in order to not look old. As Rav Shimshon Pincus, z”l, writes in his sefer, this has even crept into our circles.

We refer to certain great teachers in our tradition as “The Alter from Slabodka” and “The Alter from Kelm”. This literally means “The old man from Slabodka” or “The old man from Kelm”. This is not a pejorative and it is not a derogatory term. On the contrary – this is a badge of honor. In Eretz Yisrael where these individuals are referred to by a Hebrew (rather than a Yiddish) title, they are not referred to as “HaZaken mi Slabodka” or “HaZaken mi Kelm”, rather they are referred to as “HaSaba mi Slabodka”, etc. (the “Grandfather” from Slabodka, not the “old man” from Slabodka). Why? It is because even today, “ziknah” is something to be embarrassed about.

So what is the deeper message of Avraham’s request for “ziknah”? It is obvious that this was not merely a practical matter of trying to identify who is the father and who is the son. It would have been a much simpler idea to have them wear name tags. The father could have had the name ‘Avraham’ embroidered on his shirt and the son could have had a matching shirt with the name ‘Yitzchak’ embroidered upon it! Problem solved.

However, Avraham said, “No. I want to be old and I want to look like an old man.” And the Ribono shel Olam said, as it were, “It’s a great idea!”. So what has happened between the time of Avraham Avinu and our day and age? I don’t know historically when this focus on youth began – whether it’s a twentieth century phenomenon or a nineteenth century innovation. I am not sure when it started — but that is certainly the mindset today. People do not want to be old and they do not want to look old.

R. Shimshon Pincus, z”l, offers the following insight: If a person has had an accomplished life and can look back proudly at his years, he is not upset at the fact that his future may be very limited. A person can look back at what he has accomplished and be proud of it. On the other hand, if people look back on their lives and do not have so much to show for them, the only thing that consoles them is the future that lies ahead of them. If you are 30 years old and you have a good 40, 50, or 60 years ahead of you then you have no problem with that. However, someone who is 60 or 70 years old knows that he has already lived most of his life. He faces the specter that “he may not have much time left”. A person wants to delude himself to think “I am still

young. I still have a long time ahead of me.” What about the fact that I go to the mirror in the morning and I see that I am not so young? Well, there is a way of getting around that. There is cosmetic surgery, there is hair coloring and there are there are face lifts. I want to be young or I want to look young. I want to feel young. Why? Because I want to tell myself that the future still stretches in front of me.

When people live empty lives, they do not want to get old, look old or feel old. Avraham Avinu had no problem with this. Avraham was “bah b’yamim” – he made good use of every single day. He looks back – at this point in his history – and says “Yes, I know most of my life is over, but that does not upset me because I have what to show for it.” Therefore ‘ziknah’ – old age, is a badge of honor to wear. “I am old, but look what I have done.” Therefore Avraham asked for ziknah. It is only when a person cannot be proud of the past and his whole mindset is “there is still a future” that he needs this charade that he still has a long and glorious future ahead of him even though chronologically that may not be the case.

**Hashem Makes Matches But We Can Do Something Ourselves To Help Solve The Shidduch Crisis**

The parsha deals with the episode of Avraham Avinu sending Eliezer on the most important mission of his life – to find an appropriate mate for Yitzchak. The future of Klal Yisrael depended on this match. The narration records that Avraham makes Eliezer swear that he will not take a girl of Canaanite lineage. As we have explained many times in the past, Avraham knew that Canaanite personality traits (midos) were not what he wanted in his daughter-in-law.

Avraham further instructed his servant not to take Yitzchak back to the land of Avraham’s birthplace and family: “Hashem, G-d of the heavens, Who took me from the house of my father and from the land of my birth; and Who spoke concerning me, and Who swore to me saying, ‘To your offspring will I give this land’; He will send His angel before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there.” [Bereshis 24:7].

Rashi notes that in Chapter 24 pasuk 3 Avraham uses the expression “I will have you swear by Hashem, G-d of the heavens and G-d of the earth” but in pasuk 7, a scant 4 pesukim later, Avraham merely invokes the name of “Hashem, G-d of the heavens...” without any reference to G-d also being the “G-d of the earth”. Why is this so? Rashi says (on pasuk 7) “...now – at this moment in history – he is the G-d of the heaven and the G-d of the earth for I have familiarized Him in the mouth of the people (i.e., for I have put people in the habit of mentioning him); but when He took me from my father’s house, He was G-d of the heavens, but not G-d of the earth, for those who lived in the world did not recognize Him.

I saw an interesting observation in the sefer Shemen HaTov from Rav Dov Weinberger. Is Avraham bragging to Eliezer? Is he saying, “You, know Eliezer, it is only because of me that G-d is now considered G-d of Heaven and G-d of earth as well!”? This is not Avraham Avinu. He is not boasting and he is certainly not boasting in front of Eliezer. So why does he stress “and G-d of the earth”?

Avraham Avinu was telling his servant, “Eliezer, now you are going to go do something called ‘finding a shidduch’ for my son. In order to find a shidduch, you need not only an Elokai haShamayim (G-d in Heaven), but you need an Elokai haAretz (G-d of the earth) as well. Shidduchim come about because of the direct involvement of the Ribono shel Olam. You cannot do this on your own and we cannot do this on our own, we need the involvement of the Master of the World.

As the Chazon Ish once said, in our day and time, when the Divine Providence of G-d is so often hidden, there is still one area of life where we can see the direct involvement of the Ribono shel Olam. That is in marriage matches. We see that indeed “marriages are made in heaven”.

Here on the threshold of sending his servant to find a match for his son, Avraham mentions that Hashem is the G-d of Heaven and also the G-d of

earth. He is personally and actively involved in all that happens in helping us make our shidduchim.

This brings me to the following comment. As everyone painfully knows, there is a phenomenon that impacts our community that is commonly called “the shidduch crisis”. Unfortunately, there are hundreds if not thousands of singles in our community who want to get married but have not yet able to do so. While this is a problem that affects both boys and girls, it seems to be a much greater problem when it comes to girls.

I constantly receive calls inquiring about different boys in the Yeshiva. I can many times hear the panic and terror in the parents’ voices when they have an older daughter and she still has not yet found a shidduch. It is in fact a terrible crisis. Some time ago, a group of people joined together and initiated what is referred to by the acronym N.A.S.I. – The North American Shidduch Initiative.

Everyone has different theories as to the source of the problem. N.A.S.I. arranged for a group of actuarial scientists to ‘crunch the numbers’. They came up with the theory that the shidduch crisis is being exacerbated by the fact that boys tend to marry girls that are several years younger than them. The problem, they feel, derives from the rapid growth of the ‘frum’ community. If one assumes a 3.5 – 4.5% growth rate per year and a 2.5 – 3.5 year gap between the age when boys are getting engaged and when girls are getting engaged, the mathematical basis for the problem is evident:

If we assume a 4% growth rate per year, 100 ten year olds there will be 104 nine year olds and 108 eight year olds. So if boys on the average marry at age 23 and girls on the average marry at age 20, this means that for every 100 boys there will be 112 girls. This translates into a community that has a serious problem. The math decrees that there will be girls “left out” if all boys marry girls younger than themselves.

To solve this problem, N.A.S.I.’s goal is to encourage boys to marry girls that are closer in age to themselves and even to marry older girls. This is something tangible that can be done to address this problem. True the Ribono shel Olam is involved in the process, but we need to make our own efforts. Therefore by encouraging this shift in mindset as to what age girls and boys should consider marrying, we are doing something tangible to solve this problem.

N.A.S.I. is offering monetary rewards to people who make shidduchim where the boys are closer in age to the girls they marry or even younger than them. When bochrin in the Yeshiva come to me and ask me this question – and I get this shaylah very often – “Is there anything wrong with marrying a girl who is older than me”, I tell them the following fact: Rebbetzin Neubereger, ob”m, was older than Rabbi Neuberger ob”m and that Rabbi Neuberger even then was a smart man. To my knowledge, they had a wonderful marriage. In short, there is nothing wrong with going ahead with such a shidduch. So what if a girl is six months or even a year older than her chosson? Even two years older, so what? Actuarially, men live fewer years than women. What is the problem?

This is an idea that is important to discuss on Parshas Chayei Sarah, the parsha of Shidduchim. We should have this idea in mind and people who have sons of marriageable age should encourage them to marry girls that are near their age or even older. Let us all take these ideas to heart and hopefully help contribute to the solution of this very painful problem. *Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD [dhoffman@torah.org](mailto:dhoffman@torah.org)*

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From: Shabbat Shalom [shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org](mailto:shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org)  
reply-to: [shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org](mailto:shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org)  
subject: Shabbat Shalom from the OU  
*OU Torah Matchmaking: Holy Task*  
*Rabbi Eliyahu Safran*

We think of the many things we do in our lives and the remarkable pressure we feel to perform. We come up to bat in the bottom of the last inning, two

outs and runners in scoring position; we sit in classrooms with our palm sweating, waiting to take an exam; we argue in courtrooms and make investment decisions; we move our families from one community to another... the list goes on and on. There is so much we have to do, and so much we have to get right. Imagine then the incredible pressure Eliezer felt when he was sent out by Abraham to find a wife for his beloved son, Isaac!

What decision can we make that is more fateful than the choice of a lifetime mate? From that decision unfurls years of happiness, successful child-rearing, the blessing of a home filled with learning, respect and holiness.

Or not.

Finding the right mate can be fraught with uncertainty; a decision of remarkable moment. So important, so weighty, so meaningful the decision that it is sometimes a wonder that any of us manage to cross that threshold!

Our tradition is clear when it comes to marriage. We do not share the “transactional” perspective of, say, the English gentry, where a marriage is first and foremost a matching of wealth and stature. For us, a marriage is not simply the wedding of families and assets, a brokering of business and power. No, Jewish tradition is clear that marriage is a holy union, one that God takes special delight in. We hold that, in fact, each one of us has a true soul mate with whom we are to share our lives, a soul mate that God has chosen for us.

However, the task of recognizing who that special person is and engaging in the act of bravery necessary to make the connection is not for the weak of heart! Our perfect match might cross our path a hundred times a day. Or she may happen to be visiting family and crosses our path but once. We might share a plane, a railway car. We may fail to look up from a text at the exact right moment to find ourselves looking into the eyes of the one God has chosen as our beloved.

Our beloved may be right there in front of us but we do not see her.

There are so many opportunities to miss the moment when we might realize our perfect match.

As Jews, the risk of not finding the perfect match is too great to leave to chance encounters; the great personal relationship drama of our lives is too essential to trust even our own transitory passions, the sudden lightness in our hearts or our own fleeting hopes and dreams. So, in our tradition, just as Abraham turned to his trusted servant to find a match for Isaac, we turn to the matchmaker, the shadchan, to ensure our perfect match.

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In this age of J-Date, bar scenes, parties it seems that finding a mate is near impossible. But do we really believe that finding the life mate God intends for us is any more or less difficult now than in the past? Imagine how difficult must it have been for Abraham seeking a mate for Yitzchak? Living so far from his kin. Seeking the mate who could perpetuate values, morals and ideals with which to create a Godly nation.

After the early promise of becoming the father of a great nation, Abraham waited a lifetime before being privileged to have a son. Abraham knew he would have to find for him a life partner wholly committed to the ideals Abraham and Sarah had instilled in Yitzchak. How to find such a mate? Who could he send in search of that perfect, God-chosen match?

In Abraham’s eyes, there could be no Shadchan as trustworthy as Eliezer. Who but his own loyal servant could find the right girl? Who but Eliezer fully understood the role Yitzchak’s wife would fill as the second of our imahot?

Trusting Eliezer to find the perfect wife for Yitzchak, Abraham instructed him where to go and what to look for. Preparing to go out to fulfill his master’s directive, he paused to ask what even now seems to be a logical question, “Perhaps (ulai) the woman will not go after me?” Perhaps, he wondered, even if he found the perfect woman for Isaac, she would decide not to return with him!

Ulai!

This “perhaps” speaks to so much that is fraught in the finding of a match!

Rashi cites the Midrash which focuses on the spelling of ulai (alef, lamed, yud) and notes those same letters could also be read as eilai – “to me”. Could there be any consequence to the “missing” vav? Our tradition suggests that every letter, every space of Torah has meaning and is there for a reason so certainly this “missing” vav teaches us something about the narrative, about Eliezer, and about matchmaking itself!

The Midrash teaches that even as Abraham sought to find a match for Isaac, Eliezer had a daughter he sought to marry off, and that he was attempting to draw Avraham’s attention to his own family. “Why,” he was asking, “send me out on a long trek to find a shiduch? Look right at me (elai) I have a daughter for Yitzchak to marry.”

Imagine! The most prominent member of the community assigning a task to his trustworthy Shadchan only to have the Shadchan act in a self-serving manner and suggest his own daughter, overlooking his own deficiencies emanating from the cursed Canaan! What chutzpah! What disloyalty! But why does the Midrash attribute such disloyalty to this most loyal of all servants, to one who lived in Abraham’s tent and imitated his ways? Just because of the letter combination ulai /elai?

This is not the accusation of an innocent, honest shadchan. Quite the opposite. As we learn, Eliezer used phraseology which gave away his true intent.

Often, it is the use of a single word rather than another which betrays our deepest thoughts and intent. A single word can convey an entire message; just one word ....

The Gaon of Vilna explains that there are two words in Hebrew both meaning “perhaps” – ulai and pen. Although both mean “perhaps” there is an important difference in connotation between the two. When one uses the term pen, he is suggesting that he hopes that the possibility spoken about does not take place, as in God’s warning against idolatry – hishamru la’chem pen yifte le’vavchem (Beware, lest your hearts will become seduced.) It is clear that God hopes that we not go astray and follow idolatry – pen.

However, when one hopes and anticipates that the option he mentions should occur, he uses the word ulai, as when Avraham beseeched God not to destroy Sodom, “Ulai – perhaps there are fifty righteous people...”

And that is why Chazal were critical of Eliezer’s true intent. He did not use the word pen. Instead, by using the word ulai, we learn that he did not want the woman to follow him. Instead, he hoped that by her not following, the result would be that Avraham would have no other option but to marry Yitzchak to Eliezer’s daughter.

Many might assign deviousness to Eliezer’s thinking here. But Reb Yitzchak of Vurka suggests another thought – as long as Eliezer was in Abraham’s company it never entered his mind to contemplate a marriage for his daughter to Avraham’s son. It was only when sitting in the company of Bethuel and Lavan, seeing and experiencing who these mechutanim are that he thought to himself, “I am good enough for these people; I am certainly worthy of such a shiduch...” and began to imagine his own daughter married to Isaac. Oh how our minds play tricks on us! How we rationalize and compromise, finding all manner of explanation as to why things should be the way we’d like rather than the way God intends!

If the task of being a good and true shadchan was difficult for Eliezer, how much more so must it be for those in our own times who fulfill this sacred role? With so much license and power, twisted logic and devious thinking has the potential to wreak havoc and ruin lives!

Though the ways of man are wily, the ways of God are true. When God determines a match “made in heaven”, even the trickery of man cannot keep the two apart.

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We would be foolish to believe that the need for a wise and insightful shadchan has lessened in our modern age or that the potential for deviousness and trickery amongst the shadchanim has lessened. We would be even more foolish to think that the pitfalls of finding an honest marriage broker have lessened since Eliezer uttered his “ulai/eili”.

When I shared with my colleagues my intention to write about shadchanim I received a great deal of advice, most of it direct and to the point. “Tread lightly!” I was advised, as colleague after colleague shared horror stories of matches gone wrong.

More than what goes wrong, how can we highlight what goes right when this difficult, sacred task is engaged?

Aish.com suggested fifty ways to be a good matchmaker in an article. Some of the suggestions seem obvious (“Being single is hard enough, so be nice to people.) Others, more insightful (Your tone of voice matters. Speak nicely – especially when someone declines your awesome date idea.) But in order to really understand the challenges and the joys of being a good, modern shadchan nothing quite suffices as meeting one!

Tova Weinberg, whom I vividly recall from my Pittsburgh days as dynamic and vivacious, has been a matchmaker for quite a while. When she meets someone for the first time, her initial question is inevitably, “Are you Jewish?” followed quickly by, “Are you married?” She holds in her head and heart a bursting – and virtual – Rolodex of the names of single Jews to be matched.

Over the years, she has introduced well over two hundred couples who have gone on to get married. That number does not include the many others who met online on the matchmaking website she helped found, SawYouAtSinai.com (the name, of course, speaks volumes about what matchmaking means to her.)

Hardly born into matchmaking, she discovered her “gift” when she first came to New York, sent there by her mother to find a mate! There, an older friend, dedicated to matchmaking, asked Ms. Weinberg to help organize a singles party.

As she related the incident in a New York Times article, “At the party,” Ms. Weinberg said, “I meet this girl named Debbie, and I said, ‘You don’t know me, but I have this feeling you’d be perfect for my friend Mark Goldenberg.’” The woman was reluctant to meet a stranger. “There were so many hijackings, there was David Berkowitz,” the Son of Sam killer. “She said, ‘How do I know you’re not a mass murderer?’ I got on my hands and knees and said, ‘Do me a favor and have dinner with him.’”

The day after the couple’s first date, Ms. Weinberg heard from the man. “He called me and said, ‘I’m going to marry her.’ And they just married off their last child.”

There is no “ulai” in Tova Weinberg’s matchmaking. Just joy and dedication to helping others find the match that was dedicated to them at Sinai!

She shared with me the “Five P’s” of being a good shadchan – Be Patient, Positive, Persistent, Persuasive, and Pragmatic. These Five P’s, combined with the following eight rules add up to the perfect mix for becoming (and recognizing in someone else) the perfect shadchan:

- 1) Every time you meet someone, who is not married, you are impressed with think of who you can set them up with, write their name down and contact info.
- 2) Keep a list of everyone you know that is single, and add to it as you meet new people, make two lists one for me and one for women and write down what you liked about them.
- 3) Be proactive on behalf of your single friends
- 4) Be Persistent- always follow through with an idea
- 5) Put some thought into your match ideas
- 6) Be respectful of the decisions that singles make, and do not second guess them or give unsolicited advice. Do not push them into dating someone that they do not want to go out with and don’t ever make them feel that if they don’t go out with this person they will never marry. Value their judgments.
- 7) Be discrete, guard the privacy of the singles that you are helping and do not repeat details of their dates to others.
- 8) Don’t think you have to be a proven matchmaker in order to set people up. Anyone can set up a match, as long as you persevere and use common sense and compassion.

Every single match comes from Hashem, sometimes he makes us the messenger and sometimes he does not

Abraham’s experience with Eliezer teaches us the gift – and potential pitfalls – of the shadchan. Tova Weinberg teaches us that in our modern age, despite all the wondrous technology surrounding us, we are still as we were generations upon generations ago – human beings and Children of God, who benefit from a wise, honest and loving guide in finding the match God intends for us.