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YUTorah-in-Print:-Parshat-Chayei-Sarah-5784

Has the World Gone Mad?

Rabbi Moshe Taragin

The Jewish future depends upon the selection of a suitable bride for Yitzchak. Unable to travel, Avraham places his legacy in the hands of his trusted assistant. Because local women aren't morally suited to mother Yitzchak's progeny, a bride must be chosen from a distant land. Avraham's servant is charged with a decision which will affect Jewish destiny. Surprisingly, instead of selecting Yitzchak's future wife, his servant arranges a contrived method for identifying the proper woman. Entirely removing himself from the process, he casts the decision into the hands of fate, hoping for divine intervention. The first girl who offers refreshment to him and his herd of camels will become the mother of our nation. Instead of deliberation and decision making, he suspends his reasoning and leaves it to Providence. Fortunately, Hashem did not tolerate a random process and delivered Rivka to Yitzchak. Despite the gravity of this decision and the long-term consequences of his mission, this servant defaults to chance rather than plotting a more careful and conscious path. By spotlighting this gimmicky solution, the Torah, effectively, critiques his abandonment of the decision. Unlike the servant, Avraham was a bold decision maker. During his dramatic career he faced numerous weighty

decisions, but never balked or flinched. He emigrated to a foreign land, twice relocated in the face of a stymying famine, went to war against fierce chieftains, and twice took the excruciating decision of dismissing undesirable family members. His boldest decision was silently following divine instructions to sacrifice his son, an idea which clashed with his own moral instincts.

By contrasting Avraham's decision-making skills with his servant's inability to face decisions, the Torah highlights the religious importance of free will.

Monotheism and Free Will

In the ancient and dark world of paganism human beings weren't afforded "special status". Many different gods were responsible for creating different parts of our world and the absence of any all-powerful God dismissed any notion that Man was a selected creature.

Avraham spoke of a One, all-powerful G-d, responsible for all of creation. Having created everything, that One G-d carefully crafted Man in His image and in His likeness. Man was endowed with free will and freedom of conscience, and was similar to G-d. The emergence of monotheism introduced the concept of human free will, and Avraham's ability to shoulder the weight of decision making reflected his religious beliefs. By contrast, Avraham's servant from a foreign land is not part of this monotheistic tradition. His avoidance of decision making is a throwback to a pagan culture in which Man is lost in the chaos and uncertainty of Nature, frightened for his future and unwilling to shoulder the burden of decisions.

Twins

Ultimately, Rivka marries Yitzchak and bears twin boys. In describing this pregnancy, the Torah repeatedly emphasizes that they incubated within one common womb. By stressing their identical genealogy, the Torah further reinforces the power of free will. Though their DNA was 100% identical they each possessed and exercised free will about their future. One became righteous and pious while the other became violent and enraged. Their fates weren't predetermined but solely a product of their own decision making. In the book of Genesis, those who belong to the legacy of monotheism author their own decisions, while outsiders balk in the face of decisions. Free will is a crucial byproduct of monotheism.

Abdicating Freedom of Thought

Sadly, over the past few weeks we have witnessed largescale abdication of freedom of thought, as opponents of Israel line up to condemn us for "moral crimes", while celebrating deplorable acts of torture and monstrosity. What is happening to the human race, and why are people reflexively supporting butchers and murderers while accusing us of fictitious crimes? Has the world lost its marbles? It certainly seems that way. What is happening to human freedom?

Hate

In part, people have abandoned clear thinking because they are consumed with hate. Hate is a powerful emotion which clouds our judgment and muddles our moral assessments. It leads to confirmation bias by which we accept only the facts which confirm our preexisting hatred. Opportunistic antisemites are always waiting in the wings, prepared to join whatever group or movement preaches hatred of Jews and violence toward Jews. The particular agenda or platform of antisemitism makes no difference, as long as Jews are vilified for fabricated crimes, and hatred is fomented. In medieval times blood libels preceded pogroms. In 2023, first came the pogrom and afterwards the blood libels commenced. Many of our haters are lost in a cloud of hatred which has fogged their minds.

Social pressure

Group think or herd mentality has also caused many to abandon reason and moral clarity while naively joining the anti-Israel parade. We assumed, incorrectly, that modernity would afford greater freedom. After all, the modern world delivered us political freedom, economic freedom, and, most recently, freedom to independently acquire information. However, by exponentially swelling the information flow, social media has induced group thinking. People sheepishly subscribe to popular opinions, mistaking popularity for accuracy or for morality. Without possessing even a smidgeon of knowledge of Oct 7 or the events of the past 75 years people denounce us, while mindlessly supporting sub-human animals who committed and continue to commit unspeakable crimes. My favorite but sad story surrounds an anti-Israel protester who was asked to describe which land “from the river to the Sea” Israel should abandon. He responded that the Palestinians deserve all the land from the Nile River to the Red Sea. Effectively, he was protesting against Israel about land in Egypt. Absolutely no knowledge of the situation, but frenzied rage and indignation. Israel bashing has become a popular fad. Supporting the “Oppressed”

Additionally, the politicalization of morality is causing moral confusion. As moral values decline, morality has become politicized. Ideally, morality is defined through personal conduct to individuals with whom we live in contact. Virtue signaling is gradually replacing actual moral behavior, which is in sharp decline. Seeking to compensate for actual morality, many desperately adopt moral “causes” such as planetary conservation or animal rights.

Searching for broad moral “causes” people adopt simplistic formulas to determine virtue. In the modern world the most simplistic formula is the “David and Goliath” narrative where those who occupy power are always criminal, while the oppressed suffer in virtuous silence. Though the narrative sometimes pertains, in our instance it is completely specious. Our people have faced religious violence from Islamic extremists for thousands of years, and our state has been under siege since its inception. Thank G-d we are no longer

helplessly weak and oppressed but powerful enough to defend our lives. However, the “David and Goliath” narrative offers an easy but false formula for determining the criminal party. Enter the foolishness known as intersectionality which asserts that all oppressed parties possess one common agenda. All aggrieved parties share the common enemy which was recently termed “the constellations of power” who look to discriminate against the weak. Based on this corrupt logic, if you are aggrieved, you must automatically bash Israel. It is ludicrous to witness gay people supporting Hamas murderers who would gladly toss them off a roof and drag their bodies through the street. But to people who are blinded by intersectionality or muddled by false virtue signaling, facts don’t matter. They make no difference.

Goodbye freedom, hello madness.

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<https://theyeshiva.net/jewish/>

Rabbi YY Jacobson

To Truly Be Alive Some People Don’t Have to Die to Be Dead

The Vilna Gaon's Idea

The study of Torah is so multi-layered and multi-faceted. You can focus on the theme, on the storyline, on the lessons derived, on the structure, syntax, words, and phrases, on the structure of the verses and portions, and on the hidden meanings. But sometimes we are shocked by that which we do not even bother to notice, because our minds are not trained for such nuanced thinking.

One of the great minds who zoomed-in to such wonderful aspects of Torah was one of the great Lithuanian sages of the 18th century, known as the Vilna Gaon. Rabbi Elijah ben Solomon Zalman Kramer, known in Hebrew the Gra (Gaon Reb Eliyahu) lived from 1720-1797, and wrote dozens of brilliant works on all aspects of Jewish thought and law.

I want to read with you the verse in the opening of Chayei Sarah, and tell me if you notice an apparently unnecessary repetition – not once or twice or thrice, but seven times! And then the last time, there is a significant shift.

The Storyline

Here we go, tune in.

חיי שרה כג, ב: וַתָּמָת שָׂרָה בְּקִרְיַת אֲרָבַע הוּא חֲבֵרוֹן בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַיָּבֹא אֲבָרָהָם לִסְפֹּד לְשָׂרָה וּלְבִלְתָּהּ: ג. וַיָּקָם אֲבָרָהָם מֵעַל פָּנָיו מִתּוֹ וַיִּדְבֹּר אֶל-בְּנֵי-יִשְׁחָת לֵאמֹר: ד. גִּרְיֹתָיִשָׁב אֲנֹכִי עִמָּכֶם תָּנוּ לִי אֶחָזֶה-לְקַבֵּר עִמָּכֶם וְאֶקְבְּרָהּ מָתִי מִלִּפְנֵי: ה. וַיַּעֲנוּ בְנֵי-יִשְׁחָת אֶת-אֲבָרָהָם לֵאמֹר לוֹ: ו. שְׁמַעְנוּ אֲדֹנָי נִשְׂאֵא אֱלֹהִים אִתָּהּ בְּתוֹכֵנוּ בְּמִבְחָר קִבְּרֵנוּ קִבֵּר אֶת-מִתָּהּ אִישׁ מִמֶּנּוּ אֶת-קִבְּרוֹ לֹא-יִזְקֶלָה מִמָּה מִקְבֵּר מִתָּהּ: ז. וַיָּקָם אֲבָרָהָם וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ לְעַם-הָאֲרָץ לְבְנֵי-יִשְׁחָת: ח. וַיִּדְבֹּר אִתָּם לֵאמֹר אִם-יִשׂ אֶת-נַפְשְׁכֶם לְקַבֵּר אֶת-מִתָּתִי מִלִּפְנֵי שְׁמַעְנוּ וּפָגַעוּ-לִי בַעֲפֹרוֹן בְּרִצְחָר: ט. וַיִּתְּמֹרֵלִי אֶת-מַעֲרַת הַמַּכְפֶּלֶה אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ אֲשֶׁר בְּקֶצֶה שְׂדֵהוּ בְּקֶסֶף מָלֵא וַתִּתְּנָה לִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם לְאֶחָזֶה-קִבְּרִי: י. וַעֲפֹרוֹן יָשָׁב בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי-יִשְׁחָת וַיַּעַן עֲפֹרוֹן הַחַתִּי אֶת-אֲבָרָהָם בְּאָזְנוֹ בְּנִיִּיחָת לִכָּל בָּאֵי שַׁעַר-עִירוֹ

לאמר: יא. לא־אֶדְנִי שְׁמַעֲנִי הַשְׁדָּה נָתַתִּי לָךְ וְהַמְעָרָה אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ לָךְ נִתְּתִיהָ לְעֵינִי בְּנִי־עַמִּי נִתְּתִיהָ לָךְ קִבְר מִתָּד: יב. וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אֲבָרְהָם לִפְנֵי עַם הָאֲרָץ: יג. וַיִּדְבֹר אֶל־עֶפְרוֹן בֶּאֱזִנִּי עִם־הָאֲרָץ לֵאמֹר אֵד אִם־תָּאֲתָה לִּי שְׁמַעֲנִי נָתַתִּי כֶסֶף הַשְׁדָּה קַח מִמֶּנִּי וְאֶקְבְּרָה אֶת־מִתִּי שָׁמָּה: יד. וַיַּעַן עֶפְרוֹן אֶת־אֲבָרְהָם לֵאמֹר לוֹ: טו. אֲדֹנִי שְׁמַעֲנִי אֲרָץ אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שְׁקֶל־כֶּסֶף בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ מִה־הוּא וְאֶת־מִתְּדָךְ קִבְר:

Genesis 23:2: Sarah died in Kiriath-Arba—now Hebron—in the land of Canaan; and Abraham proceeded to mourn for Sarah and to bewail her.

Then Abraham rose from beside his dead, and spoke to the Hittites, saying, “I am a resident alien among you; sell me a burial site among you, that I may **bury my dead**.” And the Hittites replied to Abraham, saying to him, “Hear us, my lord: you are a prince of G-d among us. **Bury your dead** in the choicest of our burial places; none of us will withhold his burial place from you for **burying your dead**.” Thereupon Abraham bowed low to the landowning citizens, the Hittites, and he said to them, “If it is your wish that I **bury my dead**, you must agree to intercede for me with Ephron son of Zohar. Let him sell me the cave of Machpelah that he owns, which is at the edge of his land. Let him sell it to me, at the full price, for a burial site in your midst.” Ephron was present among the Hittites; so Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the Hittites, the assembly in his town’s gate, saying, “No, my lord, hear me: I give you the field and I give you the cave that is in it; I give it to you in the presence of my people. **Bury your dead**.” Then Abraham bowed low before the landowning citizens, and spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the landowning citizens, saying, “If only you would hear me out! Let me pay the price of the land; accept it from me, that I may **bury my dead** there.” And Ephron replied to Abraham, saying to him, “My lord, do hear me! A piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver—what is that between you and me? And **your dead you shall bury**.”

Seven Times

Did you notice a pattern in the phraseology of the discussion? The term burying one’s dead is mentioned seven times!

1. “I am a resident alien among you; sell me a burial site among you, that I may **bury my dead**.”
2. “Hear us, my lord: you are a prince of God among us. **Bury your dead** in the choicest of our burial places.
3. none of us will withhold his burial place from you for **burying your dead**.”
4. “If it is your wish that I **bury my dead**, you must agree to intercede for me with Ephron son of Zohar.
5. I give it to you in the presence of my people. **Bury your dead**.”
6. “If only you would hear me out! Let me pay the price of the land; accept it from me, that I may **bury my dead**”
7. And **your dead you shall bury**.”

In a regular discussion such as this, the actual phrase of burying the dead might appear two, three, or four times. It

seems that anytime the Torah can insert the phrase to bury the dead it does, even if completely superfluous.

But there is something even stranger. While six of the times it refers to burying the dead, “bury my dead, bury your dead.” The seventh time, at the conclusion of the negotiations, Abraham is told, “your dead you should bury”—not “bury your dead,” but “your dead you shall bury.”

Why does the Torah use such wordy and excessive descriptions of the purpose of Abraham’s purchase? And why, in the last time the phrase is used, does the terminology switch order?

You might say, who cares? It’s just a story. But the Torah is Divine, every word and phrase are the word of G-d, dictated by the Creator to Moses. Every phrase, every repetition, even the order of a phrase, is infinitely meticulous, precise, and meaningful. As it turns out, this teaches us what it means to truly be alive. It also demonstrates how every phrase in the Torah is full of endless meaning and insight.

The Answer

The Vilna Gaon suggests a fantastic and brilliant interpretation:

Abraham purchased the Cave of Machpela as a family plot. Eventually, as Genesis progresses, we discover that three couples would be buried there: Abraham and Sarah (Chayei Sarah), Isaac and Rebecca (Vayishlach, Vayechi), Jacob and Leah (Vayechi).

Jacob makes it very clear right before his passing:

ויחי מט, כט: וַיָּצֹא אוֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם אֲנִי נֹאסֵף אֶל־עַמִּי קִבְרוּ אֹתִי אֶל־אֲבֹתַי אֶל־הַמְעָרָה אֲשֶׁר בַּשְּׂדֶה עֶפְרוֹן הַחִתִּי... שָׁמָּה קִבְרוּ אֶת אֲבָרְהָם וְאֶת שָׂרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ שָׁמָּה קִבְרוּ אֶת יִצְחָק וְאֶת רֵבֶקָה אִשְׁתּוֹ וְשָׁמָּה קִבְרְתִּי אֶת לֵאָה.

“There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried; there Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried; and there I buried Leah—The Last Grave.”

Now, the Talmud relates a fascinating and tragic story about the funeral and burial of Jacob. According to instructions, his body was taken to the Holy Land to be buried in Hebron, in the Cave of the Machpalah. A massive entourage accompanied Jacob on his final journey: Joseph, the viceroy of Egypt, together with all his brothers, all of the grandchildren, many ministers, soldiers, servants, and friends, a “huge camp” as the Torah puts it.

When the procession arrived at the Cave of Machpalah to bury Jacob, one man suddenly appeared to contest it. Who was it? It was Jacob’s twin brother Esau. There were three double-plots in the cave, one per couple. One was used for Abraham and Sarah. The next, for Isaac and Rebecca. And then one more plot was used for Leah. Now, there was only one remaining plot in the burial cave. Who would get it? Esau argued that when their father Isaac died, he left the children two plots, to be divided between the two sons. Jacob used his plot already for Leah; the last remaining plot belonged to Esau.

Now, the truth was that Jacob had purchased and bought the plot from Esau. That is why he has instructed Joseph and made him swear that he would bury him in the grave which “I prepared for myself in the land of Canaan,” since Jacob made sure to buy off the plot from Esau, years earlier, for an extraordinary huge sum of money. But Esau denied this. The children of Jacob claimed that they did have the document, but that they had left it in Egypt. Esau insisted that they were thieves, and that Jacob had no permission to be buried there. Esau stopped the burial procession.

This was before the days of Federal Express, and certainly before the days of sending a picture via WhatsApp. They sent Naftali, one of Jacob’s twelve sons, who was well known as the speediest runner among the brothers to retrieve the sale document. (Indeed, before his death, Jacob referred to Naftali as a “deer.”)

Naftali was dispatched on a marathon to Egypt, as Jacob’s body remained on the ground. Esau stood by to guard that no one violate justice, and the entire entourage stopped short.

Jacob had a grandson whose name was Chushim. He was the son of Dan, a very strong young man, and he was deaf. He was also impaired in his speaking. Unable to hear anything, he was not privy to the entire dispute between his great uncle Esau and his uncles, the children of Jacob. Chushim inquired from someone about the delay of the burial, and he was told (via sign language or in writing) what was happening. Chushim, the deaf grandchild, was horrified. “Until Naftali returns from Egypt, my grandfather should lie over there in disgrace?” he exclaimed.

Chushim took a club and struck Esau. But the strike was too hard; Esau died as a result. He was beheaded. The Talmud concludes that this tragically fulfilled the prophecy of Rebecca who once told Jacob, “Why should I lose both of you on one day?” Esau’s head, the Talmud and Midrash say, rolled into the burial plot of his father Isaac. Father and son were reunited in death.

A Plot for Seven

Ah, says the Vilna Gaon, now everything is crystal clear. The seven expressions of burying the dead in the story of the purchase of the burial cave are a prophetic reference to the seven people who would eventually come to rest in the cave.

(The Talmud says that Adam and Eve were also buried there. But they were buried earlier, before Abraham purchased the plot. Hence when the Torah speaks of “bury your dead” it is referring only to those who would still be buried following Abraham’s purchase.)

The Time of Death

But there is a profound difference between the first six and the last one, the seventh. The first six, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Leah, were people of virtue, true tzaddikim, men and women aligned with their souls and Creator. Esau, the seventh person who made it into the cave,

was of a different world. His behavior was immoral and promiscuous.

Hence, the distinction in the expression of the first six times and the seventh. Why does the Torah use the phrase “burying the dead” when talking about the righteous, and then change the order to “the dead being buried” in reference to Esau?

The Talmud states, “the righteous even in death are considered alive.”^[1] Because the tzaddik’s life is aligned with his or her inner Divine soul and consciousness. The body is a conduit for the soul, a physical channel for the Divine light of the soul, like a lightbulb for light. So even after the tzaddik is “unplugged,” the life continues. What is more, the positive influences of good people allow their memories to continue long after their bodies have been laid to rest.

This is why, in reference to the righteous, the Torah says “bury your dead.” In a spiritual sense, the burial precedes the death because the soul and legacy lives on. As the Talmud states, “Jacob did not die; his children are alive, so he is alive.”^[2]

You look at some of the greatest people of our history. Their death did not conclude their story. Even after they passed on and were brought to burial, their soul, influence, love, light, truth, values literally can be felt in the world and in the hearts of living human beings.^[3]

Conversely, the Talmud states, “the wicked even in their lifetimes are considered as dead.” When a person lives an immoral and empty life, escaping from one distraction to another distraction, even when they are physically alive, there is an internal deadness. Esau, who devoted himself to the empty pursuits of hedonism, adultery, idolatry, and murder, lived an empty life, misaligned with his essence, with his own source of life. In that sense, he was a “dead man walking.” He was a shell of his true self, not his real self. Therefore, in the seventh time, the Torah says, “your dead you shall bury.” For Esau and his ilk, death takes place prior to the actual burial. He does not have to die to be dead.

For some people, they need not be physically alive to live; and for others, they need not be physically dead to die.

This explains also why the name of this portion is “the life of Sarah,” though it is focused on events after her demise. Together with Abraham, Sarah pioneered the Jewish settlement of the Land of Canaan, and as described in the opening chapter of Chayei Sarah, her burial in the Cave of Machpelah achieved the first actual Jewish ownership of a piece of land in the Holy Land. Sarah devoted her life to the creation of the first Jewish family, and indeed the story of Rebecca’s selection demonstrates how Sarah’s successor embodied the ideals upon which Sarah founded the Jewish home.

^[1] Berachos 18. ^[2] Taanis 5b. ^[3] Why then does it even say “bury your DEAD?” The Vilna Gaon quotes Shabbos 152, that before the resurrection even the tzaddikim will revert back to

earth for an hour (See the explanation Sichas 20 Av 5732). So way after their burial there is some form of “death.”

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/1079551>

Chayei Sara 5784: With Perseverance & Determination
Mrs. Michal Horowitz

November 07 2023

In this week's parsha, Parshas Chayei Sarah, we learn of the death of Sarah Imeinu (Bereishis 23), the shidduch between Yitzchak and Rivka (Bereishis 24), and the death of Avraham Avinu (Bereishis 25).

The pasuk tells us that Sarah died at the age of 127 years, וַתָּמָת שָׂרָה, בְּקִרְיַת אֲרָבָה הוּא הַקְּבֵרוֹן בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן; וַיָּבֹא, אַבְרָהָם, לִסְפֹּד לְשָׂרָה, וּלְכַפֹּתָהּ, and Sarah died in Kiryat Arbah, which is Chevron, in the land of Canaan, and Avraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her (Bereishis 23:20). And then, Avraham had to deal with the logistics of burying his wife. For this, he entered into negotiations with Efron, for the purchase of the Cave of the Machpela, for 400 silver shekels in common currency. Considering this Land was already promised to Avraham, he paid an exorbitant sum for the Cave. Yet he was not deterred and he was willing to give up much for the purchase of the Cave (Bereishis 23).

Here we have the first purchase, by the first Ivri (Hebrew), of a portion in Eretz Yisrael. This is the Land that G-d had promised to Avraham time and again, from the time He first revealed Himself to Avraham.

And in the next perek (chapter), we learn that Avraham sent his faithful servant (who the Sages identify as Eliezer), to find and facilitate the shidduch for Yitzchak. Ultimately, after a very lengthy chapter (67 verses long!), replete with many details and nuances, Yitzchak and Rivka marry, and she entered into the tent of Sarah, and took her place as the second Eim b'Yisrael.

The major themes, then, of this parsha, are the two-fold promise Hashem made to Avraham at the dawn of our history: Eretz Yisrael and the continuity of Am Yisrael. Neither promise came easy to Avraham (and Sarah), and for both they had to struggle and overcome formidable challenges in order to acquire and succeed.

In tribute to the great visionary, statesman, leader, diplomat, and scholar, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks (Yaakov Tzvi ben Dovid Aryeh), z'l, may his memory be for a blessing, whose second yartzheit was this past Shabbos, 20 Cheshvan 5784, I quote here from his writings. With the ongoing battle for Eretz Yisrael and Medinat Yisrael taking place in full force, Hashem yerachem aleinu, his timeless words are extremely profound and powerfully relevant.

In regard to Avraham's persistence in purchasing the Cave of the Machpela, and the servant's persistence in ensuring that Rivka would become Yitzchak's wife, Rabbi Sacks writes,

“These are no minor episodes. They tell a difficult story. Yes, Abraham will have a land. Yes, he will have countless children. But these things will not happen soon, nor suddenly, nor easily. They will not occur in his lifetime, and they will not occur without human effort. To the contrary, only the most focused willpower and determination will bring them about. The divine promise is not what it first seemed: a statement that G-d will act. It is in fact a request, an invitation from G-d to Abraham and his children that they should act. G-d will help them. The outcome will be what G-d said it would be. But not without total commitment from Abraham's children against what will sometimes seem to be insuperable, insurmountable obstacles (*italics added*).

“A Land: Israel. And children: Jewish continuity. The astonishing fact is that today, four thousand years later, they remain the dominant concerns of Jews throughout the world - the safety and security of Israel as the Jewish home, and the future of the Jewish people. Abraham's hopes, and Abraham's fears, are our own (*italics added*).

“Now as then, the divine promise does not mean that we can leave the future solely to G-d. That idea has no place in the imaginative world of the first book of the Torah. On the contrary: the covenant is G-d's challenge to us, not ours to G-d. The meaning of the events of Chayei Sarah is that Abraham realized that G-d was depending on him.

“Faith does not mean passivity. It means the courage to act and never to be deterred. The future will happen, but it is we - inspired, empowered, given strength by the promise - who must bring it about” (Covenant and Conversation, Genesis, p.126-127).

On October 30, 2023, in the beginning of the fourth week of Operation Swords of Iron, the IDF released the following: Rabbi Naaran Ashchar was critically injured in the tank accident on Israel's northern border, which killed Yinon Fleischman, HYD, z'l, 31 years old, of Jerusalem, and injured two others. Rabbi Ashchar, 32, who serves as a Rosh Mesivta in the Baka hesder yeshiva in the Shadmot Mechola yishuv in the Jordan Valley, is hospitalized in the ICU, sedated and ventilated. Just four months ago, Rabbi Ashchar, a father of two children, donated a kidney to a stranger. When the war began on October 7, the IDF didn't send him a call-up notice due to his recent surgery. But that didn't deter him and he fought against the decision, even personally appealing to the head of the transplant department where his surgery took place. After a long struggle, he received permission to enlist as a volunteer. Please daven for a refuah sheleimah for Naaran Chaim ben Rochel Perla b'toch shaar cholei Yisrael.

The following Sunday, November 5, the shloshim of the Simchas Torah Massacre, the IDF announced that Naaran Ashchar succumbed to his wounds and was niftar z'l HY”D. Despite being exempt because of his selfless act of donating a kidney just four months ago, he fought his exemption so that

he could courageously fight this milchemes mitzvah on behalf of our nation and our Land.

“Faith means the courage to act and never to be deterred. The future will happen, but it is we - inspired, empowered, given strength by the promise - who must bring it about.”

תהא זכרו ברוך

בברכת בשורות טובות, ישועות, ושבת שלום

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

to: ravfrand@torah.org

date: Nov 9, 2023, 5:43 PM

subject: Rav Frand - **Parshas Chayei Sarah - Attitude & Expectations Are the Secret to Happiness & Contentment**

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly portion: #1268 – Should Rabbis Be Paid For Performing Weddings? Good Shabbos

In Parshas Chayei Sarah, the pasuk says “v’Hashem beirach es Avraham bakol” (And Hashem blessed Avraham with everything) (Bereshis 24:1). Rashi comments that the word bakol (beis-chaf-lamed) is numerically equivalent to the word Ben (beis-nun). The letters in each word add up to the number 52. The pasuk thus alludes to the fact that Hashem blessed Avraham with a son (ben).

Rashi says very early on in his Chumash commentary (Bereshis 3:8) “And I have come only to provide the simple Scriptural interpretation (p’shuto shel Mikra).” Rashi notes that there are dozens of Medrashim which provide more homiletic readings of Chumash, but he views the job of his commentary to keep it simple and provide the most straightforward reading of the pesukim (the “pashuta p’shat”). Gematriya is a legitimate mode of Torah explication, but Gematrias are not usually considered “p’shat” (Avos 3:18). The question over here is what motivated Rashi to abandon the p’shuto shel Mikra of this pasuk and replace it with a Gematria? The Radak, who is another commentary that sticks to the simple reading of the Chumash, in fact, interprets the pasuk in a way that seems closer to its simple reading: Avraham Avinu had everything and the only thing left for him to do now was to find the proper match for his son Yitzchak. This is the p’shuto shel Mikra which introduces us to the rest of the parsha.

What forced Rashi, the ‘pashtan,’ to explain this pasuk with a Gematria, when the p’shuto shel Mikra is very obvious? I found an approach to this question in the writings of the Tolner Rebbe. The following is not exactly what he said, but it is the gist of what he said, at least the way I understand it: Rashi is answering a question over here. The pasuk states that Avraham is now an old man, he had been blessed with a wonderful life – he had everything! Over the last several weeks, we learned the parshiyos of Lech Lecha and VaYera. Would you consider Avraham Avinu’s life an idyllic,

wonderful, peaceful life – such that the pasuk can now say at the end of his days that Hashem blessed him with “everything?”

Let us just list, for instance, aspects of this wonderful life that Avraham Avinu had:

#1 When he was in Ur Kasdim, he was accused of heresy and thrown into a fiery furnace

#2 He experienced the “Ten Tests” (Avos 5:3) of which Chazal speak

#3 He dealt with a wife who was childless until age 90 at which time Avraham was already 100 years old, infertility being one of the most painful of life’s experiences

#4 He dealt with the domestic trauma of Sarah doing battle with Hagar, and needing to very reluctantly banish Hagar from his household

#5 When Hagar finally gives Avraham a son, it is a son who is perhaps the first “off the Derech kid” in Jewish history

#6 Sarah is captured when Avraham went down to Mitzrayim

#7 Sarah is again captured when Avraham went down to Eretz Plishtim

#8 He successfully passed his tenth and final test – the Akeidas Yitzchak – and he returned home to find his beloved wife dead

Does this list really indicate “And Hashem blessed Avraham with ‘everything?’” Is that a wonderful life? It is a life of one trouble after another!

Rashi is answering this question. Rashi is explaining how Avraham Avinu was able to cope with all of this. What was his secret that he never gave up and he never became depressed? The answer is that Avraham Avinu possessed the quality that assures happiness in life. It is a quality that we saw previously in Parshas Lech Lecha: When HaKodosh Baruch Hu tells Avraham that he is going to have a son (Yitzchak), Avraham responds (according to Rashi there): “Halevai that Yishmael should live. I am unworthy to receive such a great reward as this!” (Bereshis 17:18)

This is the key to Avraham Avinu’s success. He does not expect anything from Heaven. Everything is considered a gift. There are only two types of people in the world – those who say “Aynee k’dai” (I am unworthy of this) and those who say “Zeh magiyah li” (I deserve this!).

This is expressed by a Medrash: Rav Levi and Rav Chanina say – On every breath a person takes, he should praise his Creator, as it is written (a play on words) “Kol haneshama te’hallel K-ah” (Every soul (i.e., each breath) should praise G-d) (Tehillim 150:6). Have any of us ever thought to say “Ah! Thank G-d that I can breathe?” Unless a person has asthma, pneumonia or some type of other terrible lung disease, chas v’shalom, a person does not think about rejoicing over the fact that “I can breathe, I can see, I can walk.” We may all say the morning blessings that express gratitude for our basic necessities in life, but who mentally thanks the Ribono shel Olam for all of that? We take it for granted.

"I need to be alive. I need to be healthy. I need to see. I need to be able to walk. I need to be able to do everything." Now, what are You going to do for me? The rest is a given.

A person that has that first attitude (I am unworthy of this) can experience all the trials and tribulations that Avraham Avinu experienced and still feel "V'Hashem beirach es Avraham ba'kol" (and G-d blessed Avraham with everything). Rashi says that "ba'kol" in Gematria equals "ben" (son). Avraham says "You gave me a son named Yitzchak? Now I have everything. I don't need anything else. Even Yishmael was enough for me. Now I have a Yitzchak as well! That is literally 'everything' (ba'kol).

This is why Rashi invokes the Gematria here. Rashi is trying to explain how the pasuk can make the statement that Hashem blessed Avraham with everything when we know that Avraham had a life full of trials and tribulations. The answer is that this was Avraham's perspective on life – "I have a son? What more do I need!"

When Avraham Avinu dies, the Torah states: "And Avraham expired and died at a good old age, an old man and content..." (Bereshit 25:8). This is the eulogy that the Ribono shel Olam says on Avraham Avinu. It is the epitaph on his tombstone. It does not say "Avraham Avinu the Ba'al Chessed." It does not say "Avraham Avinu who was willing to sacrifice his son."

The greatest thing that Hashem says about Avraham Avinu is that he died at a ripe old age full and satisfied with his life. He had no unmet wants in the world. This was his attribute in life: "I am unworthy."

We are not Avraham Avinus. We don't go through life repeating the mantra "Aynee k'dai; Aynee k'dai." But the closer we can get to the attitude of "Aynee k'dai" and the further we can get from the attitude of "Magiya li," the happier we will be. That should be our goal. That is our mission – to become "Aynee k'dai" people. Then we will be happy people.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem

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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. ...A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information.

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Themes from the First Aliyah in Chayei Sarah

Rabbi Daniel Z. Feldman

The Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 58:3) notes a connection between the 127 years of Sarah's life and the 127 provinces that her descendant, Esther, ruled over, by relating a story involving R. Akiva, who attempted to rouse his students, dozing off in the middle of his shiur. He said to them, "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."

Many explain the nature of his message as highlighting the proportional reward Sarah's meritorious life earned for her offspring. One year earns one province; perhaps one month is a county, one week a city, one day a neighborhood...look how much your time is worth! Certainly it is too precious to waste sleeping during shiur.

23:2 VaTamat Sarah. Rashi cites from the Midrash that Sarah's death is related in juxtaposition to the story of the Akedah, because the latter was the proximate cause of her death. Apparently, Sarah was told that "Yitzchak was slaughtered...almost", and before hearing the final clarification, died of shock (there are different renditions of how exactly this statement was transmitted; see Gur Aryeh and other commentaries). This midrash has practical implications regarding the care that must be taken with the communication, and especially the miscommunication, of distressing news. Citing this midrash, my father z"l was careful, whenever referencing a funeral or a shiva, to identify the deceased as "the mother of ploni" rather than "ploni's mother", out of recognition that in the split second between "Ploni" and "...s mother" the listener may get the impression that the younger individual had died. This is particularly an issue with modern electronic communications, in which an email may bear the subject heading "Funeral of Ploni's Father", and then get shortened in the inbox listing to "Funeral of Ploni..." and cause even greater distress than is called for.

Lispod L'Sarah V'Likvotah.

The midrash (Gen. Rabbah, 58:9) states that Abraham was praised as having attained the qualities of God when he buried his wife Sarah. This is striking; Abraham, who performed so much kindness in his lifetime, receives singular commendation for an act that any relative, certainly any husband, would be expected to perform.

R. Chaim Yaakov Goldvicht suggests that the other services that Abraham provided to humanity were those for which one could expect reciprocity, and thus could be understood as part of a social contract, recommended without necessarily being rooted in Divine influence. Burial, however, an act of kindness to the departed, is a "chesed shel emet," a pure, selfless act for which no reciprocity can be expected. Thus, it is a clear manifestation not of utilitarianism, but of Godliness.

R. Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg (Tokh'chat Mussar [ed. R. Mordechai Rennert], #30) also emphasizes the lack of expected reciprocity, but towards a different message. From a spiritual perspective, the value of an act of chesed is assessed not on its impact, but on the cost it extracts on the one performing the chesed. When there is no reciprocity, the equation is already lopsided; however, this is more true when the chesed comes at a time of great personal distress, further aggravated by unpleasant negotiations. Abraham's ability to persevere through all of this and give his wife the proper honor is indeed deserving of great praise.

R. Nosson Tzvi Finkel, the Alter of Slobodka, explained this midrash differently. He noted that often people do not consider tending to their own families to be chesed; it is the call of father away opportunities for service that seems more noble and praiseworthy. The truth, however, is the opposite; the mandate of chesed and tzedakah requires prioritizing those closest. Accordingly, out of a lifetime of chesed, it is the care that Abraham showed to the person closest to him that is help up as a model of following the Divine path.

<https://aish.com/282277091/>

What's Going On With The Israel-Hamas War? M'oray Ha'Aish

by **Rabbi Ari Kahn** Chayei Sarah (Genesis 23:1-25:18)

A strange negotiation is reported in this week's parasha. Sarah has died and Avraham has a carefully planned agenda for the funeral arrangements. He approaches the local clan and asks to purchase a particular parcel of land owned by a man named Efron. Efron offers to give Avraham the plot of land as a gift, free of charge, yet Avraham insists on paying for it. Eventually, a price is set; the sum is apparently exorbitant, especially considering the opening "price" offered by the seller. While some Jews take pride in their business savvy, their forefather Avraham's negotiation skills seem to have been sorely lacking: He overpays for something he could have procured for free. To make matters even worse, Avraham had been promised this entire land as his inheritance. Why did he insist on paying for something that God Himself would eventually deliver to him on a silver platter? Avraham had not "forgotten" that this land would eventually belong to him; in fact, God's promise was precisely the reason Avraham behaved so strangely in this negotiation. Part and parcel of God's promise that Avraham would inherit the Land of Israel was a "price" to be paid: "Know with certainty that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs and they will be enslaved and oppressed, for four hundred years." (Bereishit 15:13) The standard translation of this verse presents us with a much-debated problem: The Jews were not enslaved in Egypt for four hundred years. However, if the verse is read while taking into account the cantillation symbols that serve as punctuation of the Hebrew text, a very different parsing

emerges: "Know with certainty that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs for four hundred years. (At times,) they will be enslaved and oppressed." This nuanced reading of the text is not always conveyed correctly in translation, but the gist of the verse is that the four hundred years describes the duration of time in which they would be strangers or foreigners, devoid of sovereignty. The verse describes a period of time in which Avraham's descendants would be a political minority in the land that would eventually belong to them, and not a period of four hundred years of oppression and enslavement.

Fw from Hamelaket@gmail.com

from: The Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust <info@rabbisacks.org>

subject: Covenant and Conversation

COVENANT & CONVERSATION

Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l

Abraham: A Life of Faith

CHAYEI SARAH

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Abraham, the Sages were convinced, was a greater religious hero than Noah. We hear this in the famous dispute among the Sages about the phrase that Noah was "perfect in his generations," meaning relative to his generations:

"In his generations" – Some of our Sages interpret this favourably: if he had lived in a generation of righteous people, he would have been even more righteous. Others interpret it derogatorily: In comparison with his generation he was righteous, but if he had lived in Abraham's generation, he would not have been considered of any importance.

Some thought that if Noah had lived in the time of Abraham he would have been inspired by his example to yet greater heights; others that he would have stayed the same, and thus been insignificant when compared to Abraham. But neither side doubted that Abraham was the greater.

Similarly, the Sages contrasted the phrase, "Noah walked with God," with the fact that Abraham walked before God.

"Noah walked with God" – But concerning Abraham, Scripture says in Genesis 24:40: "[The Lord] before Whom I walked." Noah required [God's] support to uphold him [in righteousness], but Abraham strengthened himself and walked in his righteousness by himself.

Rashi to Genesis 6:9

Yet what evidence do we have in the text itself that Abraham was greater than Noah? To be sure, Abraham argued with God in protest against the destruction of the cities of the plain, while Noah merely accepted God's verdict about the Flood. Yet God invited Abraham's protest. Immediately beforehand the text says:

Then the Lord said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him.

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.'

Genesis 18:17-19

This is an almost explicit invitation to challenge the verdict. God delivered no such summons to Noah. So Noah's failure to protest should not be held against him.

If anything, the Torah seems to speak more highly of Noah than of Abraham. We are told:

Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord.

Genesis 6:8

Twice Noah is described as a righteous man, a tzaddik:

1) Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God (Genesis 6:9).

2) The Lord then said to Noah, 'Go into the Ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation' (Genesis 7:1).

No one else in the whole of Tanach is called righteous. How then was Abraham greater than Noah?

One answer, and a profound one, is suggested in the way the two men responded to tragedy and grief. After the Flood, we read this about Noah:

Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard. He drank some of the wine, making himself drunk, and uncovered himself in the tent.

Genesis 9:20-21

This is an extraordinary decline. The "righteous man" has become a "man of the soil." The man who was looked to "bring us comfort" (Genesis 5:29) now seeks comfort in wine. What has happened?

The answer, surely, is that Noah was indeed a righteous man, but one who had seen a world destroyed. We gain the impression of a man paralysed with grief, seeking oblivion. Like Lot's wife who turned back to look on the destruction, Noah finds he cannot carry on. He is desolated, grief-stricken. His heart is broken. The weight of the past prevents him from turning toward the future.

Now think of Abraham at the beginning of this week's parsha. He had just been through the greatest trial of his life. He had been asked by God to sacrifice the son he had waited for for so many years. He was about to lose the most precious thing in his whole life. It's hard to imagine his state of mind as the trial unfolded.

Then just as he was about to lift the knife the call came from Heaven saying 'Stop', and the story seemed to have a happy ending after all. But there was a terrible twist in store. Just as Abraham was returning, relieved his son's life spared, he discovers that the trial had a victim after all. Immediately after it, at the beginning of this week's parsha, we read of the death of Sarah. And the Sages suggested that the two events were simultaneous. As Rashi explains: "The account of Sarah's

demise was juxtaposed to the Binding of Isaac because as a result of the news of the 'Binding,' that her son was prepared for slaughter, and was almost slaughtered, her soul flew out of her, and she died." We'd say today she had a heart attack from the news.

Now try and put yourself in the situation of Abraham. He has almost sacrificed his child and now as an indirect result of the trial itself, the news has killed his wife of many years, the woman who stayed with him through all his travels and travails, who twice saved his life, who in joy gave birth to Isaac in her old age. Had Abraham grieved for the rest of his days, we would surely have understood, just as we understand Noah's grief. Instead we read the following:

And Sarah died in Kiryat Arba, that is Hebron in the land of Canaan, and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her, and Abraham rose up from before his dead.

Genesis 23:2-3

Abraham mourns and weeps, and then rises up and does two things to secure the Jewish future, two acts whose effects we feel to this day. He buys the first plot in the Land of Israel, a field in the Cave of Machpelah. And then he secures a wife for his son Isaac, so that there will be Jewish grandchildren, Jewish continuity. Noah grieves and is overwhelmed by his loss. Abraham grieves knowing what he has lost. But then he rises up and builds the Jewish future. There is a limit to grief. This is what Abraham knows and Noah does not.

Abraham bestowed this singular gift on his descendants. The Jewish people suffered tragedies that would have devastated other nations beyond any hope of recovery. The destruction of the first Temple and the Babylonian exile. The destruction of the second Temple and the end of Jewish sovereignty. The expulsions, massacres, forced conversions and inquisitions of the Middle Ages, the pogroms of the 17th and 19th centuries, and finally the Shoah. Yet somehow the Jewish people mourned and wept, and then rose up and built the future. This is their unique strength and it came from Abraham, as we see in this week's parsha.

Kierkegaard wrote a profound sentence in his journals:

It requires moral courage to grieve, it requires religious courage to rejoice. Perhaps that's the difference between Noah the Righteous, and Abraham the Man of Faith. Noah grieved, but Abraham knew that there must eventually be an end to grief. We must turn from yesterday's loss to the call of a tomorrow. We must help to be born.

Fw from Hamelaket@gmail.com

<https://en.yhb.org.il/revivim1068/>

Banish the Son of the Handmaid

Revivim ---Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

Our matriarch Sarah afflicted and chastised Hagar to put her in her place * Only when she understood there was no more chance of Hagar and Ishmael changing their ways, did she

request banishing them * The divine decree to banish the handmaid and her son, is also when it is not pleasant * The more we contributed to the prosperity of our Arab neighbors, the sons of Ishmael, the more their war against us intensified * We are commanded to examine whether and how we can encourage the emigration of our enemies from our land * If we do not succeed in removing our enemies from all our land, we will have to suffer

The Good Intention, and the Imperfections

The original intention was very good. Seeing that God had restrained her womb, our matriarch Sarah nobly decided to give her good handmaid to Abraham. It was kindness to Abraham to merit a son after so many years, and tremendous kindness to her handmaid Hagar, to connect with the righteous, esteemed Abraham. Her children would cling to the great vision that Abraham and Sarah established in the world. Sarah was certain Hagar, who had until now accepted her leadership with humility and love, would continue recognizing her superiority, and the child born to her would be raised on Sarah's knees. And due to her generosity, God would hasten her redemption, and perhaps also grant her a son. Hagar's son would join her son fulfilling the great vision they established in the world, recognizing the primacy of the son born to Sarah. But immediately after Hagar conceived, "her mistress was lowered in her esteem" (Genesis 16:4). She no longer served Sarah as before, and in her heart, she also stopped respecting her, saying: "This Sarah, her conduct in secret is not like her conduct in public. She shows herself as if she is a righteous woman, but she is not a righteous woman, for she did not merit to conceive all these years, whereas I have conceived from the first union" (Rashi, Genesis 16:4).

Similarly, many years later, the Muslims viewed the Temple's destruction and Israel's exile as proof God annulled His covenant with Israel, and their victories, as proof they replaced Israel as Abraham's heirs.

Our Matriarch Sarah's Initial Reaction

Our matriarch Sarah afflicted and chastised Hagar, to put her in her place. Ramban (Nachmanides) and Radak hold she did not behave properly in this matter. However, the righteous Sarah still hoped that afflicting the handmaid would make Hagar understand her place, and things would return to how they were beforehand. But Hagar no longer agreed to accept her authority, and fled the home. Only after an angel of God told her "Return to your mistress, and be afflicted under her hand" (Genesis 16:9), did she lower her head, accept Sarah's authority, give birth to Ishmael, and raised him on her master Abraham and Sarah's knees.

Even after Isaac was born, it still seemed Hagar accepted Isaac the mistress's son's primacy. But when Isaac became a child, Ishmael began mocking him. If Isaac strived to grow in righteousness, he, Ishmael, would pave another path. Some say Ishmael began lusting after idol worship and licentiousness.

Others say he played with Isaac in life-threatening games, revealing his inner desire to murderously hate him for taking his place. And people would say: 'Look at Abraham the Hebrew, who always preached to us to beware of robbery, licentiousness and murder – behold, his son Ishmael, is a wild man!' (See Bereishit Rabbah 53:11).

The Decision to Banish

Then, our matriarch Sarah understood there was no more chance of Hagar and Ishmael changing their ways. Hagar's return home and acceptance of authority was only external. Indeed, Hagar forgot the kindness of giving her a husband, and in her heart, believed she would inherit her mistress, with her son Ishmael becoming Abraham's successor. This is apparently also why Ishmael was becoming more degenerate. If they remained in the home, Abraham and Sarah's great vision of building a family and nation that would fix the world, could be dashed. "And she said to Abraham banish this handmaid and her son, for the son of this handmaid shall not share in the inheritance with my son Isaac" (Genesis 21:10). This was very hard for our patriarch Abraham. He, who all his life lovingly drew near the distant, was now demanded to banish his beloved son. "And God said to Abraham: Do not be distressed over the boy or your handmaid; whatever Sarah tells you, do as she says, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be continued for you" (ibid. 21:12). As if, even to Abraham our patriarch, God had to state that although Ishmael is important, and will become a nation, nonetheless "through Isaac that offspring shall be continued for you." He will continue you, not Ishmael.

The Painful, Yet Justified Banishment

If Hagar and Ishmael had separated agreeably, recognizing it is good for them to build their future elsewhere, the banishment would have been easy, and the pangs of conscience somewhat calmed. But apparently beforehand, Ishmael had already spoiled things, become unrestrained, wicked, and degenerate, to the point where Abraham could not send him from his home respectably with gifts, as he desired. Hagar and Ishmael were banished in shame (see Shemot Rabbah 1:1). Not only that, but despite Abraham guiding them on their way, they wandered in the desert, and Ishmael became deathly ill from thirst, until miraculously saved.

This is no condemnation of our matriarch Sarah, or patriarch Abraham. It is a fact that on Rosh Hashanah, the day we are careful about mentioning any speck of condemnation of Israel, our Sages instituted reading the Torah portion about banishing Hagar and Ishmael. Meaning, the divine decree to banish the handmaid and her son, is also when it is not pleasant. For the law is the law. Hagar who denied Sarah's goodness, and Ishmael who already in Abraham's home dared to worship idols, steal and threaten murder, must receive their punishment. Precisely on Rosh Hashanah, when Israel

recognizes its uniqueness and distinction above all nations, it merits a good judgement for the new year. Specifically after Hagar and Ishmael were banished and suffered did they recognize their sin, and repent. Perhaps I will be able to expand on this after the war is over, in a crushing victory over our enemies.

Then and Now

History has a tendency to repeat itself. We thought that if we were good to our Arab neighbors, the sons of Ishmael, if we made the land that was desolate under them flourish, if we developed the economy and raised their standard of living, granted them rights no other Arab have in Arab states – they would appreciate us. But the more we contributed to their prosperity – the more their war against us intensified. Even if we try afflicting and defeating them in wars – they accuse us, and cause others to do so as well. The only way for us to succeed, is by strengthening the Jewish nature of the state, clarifying to all that this land is ours, no other nation has a share or inheritance here. Anyone who lovingly accepts this can live here with us by the law of *ger toshav* (a resident alien). But towards those who do not accept this, we must act through all moral means at our disposal to make sure they emigrate elsewhere, as stated “They shall not remain in your land” (Exodus 23:33).

Three generations ago, this idea was acceptable. After World War II, over 12 million Germans fled, and were expelled from where they had lived for many generations, back to Germany. Half a million Ukrainians were expelled from Poland to Ukraine, Poles were expelled from Lithuania, Ukraine and Belarus to Poland, Italians were expelled from Yugoslavia to Italy, and Hungarians were expelled from Slovakia to Hungary.

Had Jews ascended to Israel when the nations of the world gave Britain the mandate to assist the Jewish people establish its national home in both sides of the Jordan, we would have avoided many troubles (Holocaust, Communism, and assimilation). And if the Arabs, then numbering less than a million on both sides of the Jordan fought us, we could have expelled them to their lands. But sadly, we delayed ascending to Israel, and the possibility of expelling enemies, considered moral and acceptable in the international arena 80 years ago, is today considered unacceptable.

And still, due to all the wars and waves of terror, we are commanded to examine whether, and how, we can encourage emigration of our enemies from our land. And simultaneously, draw close Arab friends, and recruit them to the army, so together with us, they will fight the State of Israel’s enemies. If we do not succeed removing our enemies from all our land, we will have to suffer, as stated: “If you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land before you, those you leave will be thorns in your eyes and stingers in your sides, and they will harass you on the land you settle” (Numbers 33:55).

Understanding the Enemy’s Warfare

In order to understand our enemy, we must realize that, in general, the Muslim religion is a warring religion. Since the prominent aspect defining Allah according to Islam is power and might, there is a great commandment to conquer lands and nations, and force Islam upon them by might of sword. This is *jihad*. They believe this expresses Allah’s absolute might. With the power of this faith, the Arabs founded a nation of brave, dedicated and stubborn warriors who conquered many lands and nations, and ruled them under Islam for over a thousand years. The war against the State of Israel takes supreme importance for them, because Islam already conquered the Land of Israel in the past, thus making it Muslim holy land in their view. It is a tremendous disgrace to their religion that a non-Muslim state arose on this land. The disgrace is magnified sevenfold being a Jewish state, for they are commanded to humiliate the Jews, in order to prove Islam replaced Judaism as the true religion.

Total Victory

The only way to exempt Muslims from the obligation to wage war to destroy the State of Israel is to decisively defeat them, until they understand they have no chance of defeating Israel, or weakening its strength. Then, according to Muslim law, they must wait until they have strength, and only afterwards will the commandment to fight in order to destroy the State of Israel return. Therefore, any Israeli concession erodes deterrence, and brings war closer.

It is fitting to add and hope, that specifically through our steadfastness and defeating the enemy, the deep streams existing in Islam recognizing that the Children of Israel and their right over the Land of Israel should be respected, will emerge. And that in truth, the purpose of Islam is to call for inner *jihad* against the evil inclination, and educate towards honoring all creatures, instead of warmongering.

from: **Rabbi Kaganoff** <ymkaganoff@gmail.com>

to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com

date: Nov 6, 2023, 1:19 AM

subject: How Much May I Charge?

What prohibition did Efron violate when he overcharged Avraham Avinu for the me’aras hamachpeila?

How Much May I Charge?

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Overcharged esrog

“My esrog dealer charged me \$150 for an esrog. My brother-in-law, who knows the business, told me that he overcharged me, and the esrog is not worth more than \$35. Can I get my money back?”

Question #2: Just a little bit

“Am I permitted to charge a little bit above the market price for an item?”

Question #3: Damaged coin

“I noticed that someone tried to scrape off some of the metal on a coin that I have. May I use it?”

Question #4: Expert error

“I purchased a rare coin from a dealer, and he clearly undercharged me. Am I required to tell him about it?”

Answer:

Upon graduation from olam hazeh, the first question asked upon entering the beis din shel maalah, the Heavenly Court, is: “Did you deal honestly with your fellowmen?” (Shabbos 31a). The Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chayim 156:3) explains that this does not mean, “Did you steal?” or “Were your weights honest?” Someone who violated those laws, whether dealing with Jewish or non-Jewish clientele, qualifies as a rosho gamur. Rather, the Heavenly Court’s inquiries are: “Did you make unjustified claims about the quality of the merchandise that you sold?” “Did you speak to people softly in your business dealings?” “Did you curse, scream, or act angrily with people?” “Did you realize that all livelihood comes only from Hashem, and acted within that framework?”

In parshas Behar, the Torah teaches, Lo sonu ish es amiso (Vayikra 25:17). The word sonu has the same root as the word onaah, the name by which we call this mitzvah. The word onaah is difficult to translate into English, but for the purposes of our article, I will use the word overcharging, although, as we will soon see, onaah also includes situations of underpayment or of misrepresentation. The purpose of this article is to present the basic principles; specific questions should be referred to your own rav or dayan. Just as everyone must have an ongoing relationship with a rav for psak and hadracha, one must also have an ongoing relationship with a dayan who can answer the myriad Choshen Mishpat questions that come up daily.

Three types of onaah

There are three types of overcharging that are included in the prohibition of onaah, all of which involve taking unfair advantage:

- (1) Fraud – when the item being sold contains a significant flaw that the seller conceals or otherwise misrepresents.
- (2) Overpricing – when one party to the transaction is unaware of the market value of the item.
- (3) No recourse – when someone is aware that he is being overcharged, but he has no recourse, because of the circumstances.

I will now explain a bit more about each of these types of onaah.

(1) Fraud

It is prohibited to hide a defect or to misrepresent an item. For example, the Mishnah (Bava Metzia 60a) and the Gemara (ibid. 60b) prohibit selling watered-down products, or painting something to hide a flaw or to make it look newer than it is (Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 228:9). One may not add inferior material to a quality product when the purchaser will see only the quality product (Bava Metzia 59b-60a; Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 228:10, 11).

Onaah is prohibited not only in sales, but also in other transactions, such as hiring people or contracting work (Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 227:35, 36, 16). Shidduchin

Holding back significant medical, emotional or spiritual issues that could affect a shidduch is also prohibited because of onaah. To quote the words of the Sefer Chassidim (#507): “When arranging matches for your children or other family members, do not hide from the other party medical issues that would have been reason for them to reject the shidduch, lest they afterwards choose to annul the marriage. Similarly, you should tell them about deficiencies in halachic observance significant enough that the other party would have rejected the marriage.”

By the way, there is no halachic requirement to reveal detrimental information to a shadchan, and one is not required to inform the other side before the couple meets. However, it must be told sometime before the shidduch is finalized. This particular topic is more detailed than we can discuss in this article. Indeed, I devoted a different article to this topic, entitled May I Keep the Skeletons in the Closet?, which is available on my website, RabbiKaganoff.com. There are also other articles on the website that touch on this broad topic, which can be found with the search word shidduch.

Insider trading

Insider trading, meaning buying or selling a commodity or security on the basis of information that is not available to the general public, is now a heavily punished felony in the United States, but was once legal there and is still legal in many countries of the world. Halacha prohibits all forms of insider trading because of onaah, since the insider is taking advantage of the other party.

(2) Overpricing

A second type of onaah is when there is no flaw or other problem with the quality of the item being transacted, but the price paid is greater than the item’s market value. Overcharging of this nature is also prohibited because of onaah.

Over a sixth

When the price, or range of price, of an item can be established, if an item was sold at more than one sixth over the market price, the aggrieved party has a right to return the item for a full refund (Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 227:4.) For example, the stores that stock this item sell it for up to \$600, and the seller charged the purchaser over \$700. In this instance, according to halacha, the purchaser can return the item and get his money back. (There are detailed halachos that govern how much time he has to make this claim.)

One can demand return compensation only when the party did not use the item once he realized that he had been overcharged.

Another case where the item cannot be returned: The aggrieved party realized that he was overcharged, but decided to keep the item anyway. In the interim, the price of the item dropped such that he can now get a much better deal. Since his reason to back out on the deal is not because of the original overcharge, he may not invalidate the original sale (Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 227:9).

It is interesting to note that there are authorities who rule that even the aggrieving party can withdraw from the deal when the price was so much off the mark. This is because they contend that the buyer does not agree to a transaction if he knows that the price was so disproportionate to the item’s value (Rema, Choshen Mishpat 227:4.)

One sixth

The halacha is that if the overcharge was by exactly one sixth, the deal holds, but the aggrieved party is entitled to be refunded the overcharge sum (one sixth of what he paid). Thus, if the item was worth \$600 and it was sold for \$700, the purchaser is entitled to receive \$100 back.

Less than a sixth

If the overcharge was less than a sixth, which means that the price was clearly too high but less than a sixth over the market value, the deal is valid, and the aggrieved party is not entitled to any compensation. Thus, if the item was worth \$600 and it was sold for \$690, the deal remains as is.

Some major authorities conclude that a yarei shamayim should return the difference, even in a case where it amounted to less than a sixth (Sma 227:14).

Is it permitted?

At this stage, we can address one of our opening questions: “Am I permitted to charge a little bit above the market price for an item?” Granted that the deal will be valid if someone did this, is one permitted to do so lechatchilah?

Indeed, this is an issue that is disputed by the halachic authorities (Tur, Choshen Mishpat 227, quoting Rosh). The Tur explains that min haTorah, overcharging is prohibited if one is aware that this is the case, but Chazal were lenient, because it is difficult for anyone to be this accurate. However, many prominent authorities are of the opinion that it is prohibited to overcharge intentionally, even by a very small amount (Aruch Hashulchan, Choshen Mishpat 227:2).

The Tur concludes that a yarei shamayim, a G-d fearing person, should try to act strictly regarding this law.

The Shulchan Aruch rules that it is uncertain whether it is permitted to overcharge by less than a sixth (Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 227:6).

Furthermore, when the price on a specific item is very exact, because of government regulations or market conditions, even those authorities who are lenient about overcharging a small amount will agree in such a case that it is prohibited to charge any more than the accepted market price (Aruch Hashulchan, Choshen Mishpat 227:3).

Cash fast

Here is a situation in which someone cannot demand return compensation, even though he sold the item at way below its value: A seller needed to raise cash quickly and therefore sold items without checking their proper value. He cannot request his money back by claiming that he was underpaid, because it is clear that, at the time he sold them, he was interested in selling for whatever cash he could get (Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 227:9).

All items?

The Mishnah (Bava Metzia 56b) quotes a dispute between tana'im whether the laws of overcharging by more than a sixth apply to items such as sifrei Torah, animals and precious stones. The tanna kamma contends that the laws of onaah apply, including the right to have the item returned, whereas Rabbi Yehudah holds that these laws do not apply to such items. In the case of sifrei Torah, this is because the pricing is difficult to determine, and in the cases of animals and precious stones, because the purchaser may have a special need for this specific animal or stone which makes it worth more to him than the usual market price. For example, this animal has the same strength as an animal the purchaser already owns, making it possible to pair them together in work;

or this stone matches well to the specific color and size he is using for a piece of jewelry (Bava Metzia 58b).

Wartime

Although most tana'im disagree, the Gemara (Bava Metzia 58b) adds that Rabbi Yehudah ben Beseira ruled that there is no onaah for selling horses, shields or swords during wartime, because your life might depend on it. I presume this means that during a war, the value of these items far exceeds their normal market price, and that, therefore, even an inflated price is not considered overcharging. The halacha does not follow the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda ben Beseira. Therefore, should someone be overcharged for the purchase of these materials during wartime, he is not required to pay more than the accepted market price.

Overcharged esrog

At this point, we are in a position to examine our opening question: "My esrog dealer charged me \$150 for an esrog. My brother-in-law, who knows the business, told me that he overcharged me, and the esrog is not worth more than \$35. Can I get my money back?"

This question is discussed in Shu"t Beis Yitzchak (Orach Chayim 108:4). He explains that the laws of invalidating a transaction because of an overcharge do not apply to an esrog purchased for use on Sukkos, unless the esrog was not kosher. His reason is that an individual has all sorts of reasons why he wants to purchase a specific esrog, and that, therefore, high-end esrogim do not have a definitive price. We could compare this to someone who purchases a painting at auction, and an art expert contends that the purchaser overpaid. The opinion of the expert does not allow the buyer to invalidate his acquisition.

Expert error

Let us return to another of our opening questions: "I purchased a rare coin from a dealer, and he clearly undercharged me. Am I required to tell him about it?"

An expert can also be overcharged or underpaid (Mishnah, Bava Metzia 51a; Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 227:14). Therefore, the purchaser is required to point this out to the dealer.

Furthermore, if you know that the price of an item has gone up, but the seller is unaware of this, you are required to let him know (Aruch Hashulchan, Choshen Mishpat 227:1).

Mistaken overcharging

A person who overcharged someone in error is required to bring it to his attention. All the halachos mentioned above of overcharging apply, even if it was unintentional (Pischei Choshen 4:10:ftn #1).

Real estate

The Mishnah (Bava Metzia 56a) states that there is no onaah regarding real estate. This means that the concept of a deal being invalidated when the price is more than a sixth overpriced does not relate to land. Nevertheless, it is prohibited to deceive someone in matters germane to property, such as by withholding information that affects the value of the property or its utility (Sma 227:51, quoting Maharshal; Pischei Teshuvah 227:21, quoting Ramban and Sefer Hachinuch).

Title search

If someone sells a property based on his assumption that proper ownership has been established, which is later legally challenged, the purchaser has a claim to get his money back (Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 226:5).

Legal tender

At this point, let us examine another of our opening questions: "I noticed that someone tried to scrape off some of the metal on a coin that I have. May I use it?"

In earlier days, a coin's value was usually determined by its weight and purity. In today's world, the value of a coin or other currency is determined predominantly by the market forces germane to that country's currency, but not by the quality of the individual coin, unless it is damaged to the point that it will no longer be accepted in the marketplace. Therefore, today, it is acceptable to use a damaged coin or bill that the average merchant or the bank will accept (Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 226:6). One is even lechatchilah permitted to give someone a damaged coin or bill and hoard the nice-looking ones for himself, since it is not harming the other party in any way (Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 227:6 and Sma).

Counterfeit money

However, this is true only when the bill or the coin is damaged, but is still legitimate and legal currency. It is forbidden to use counterfeit money, even if you ended up with it in error. Once you know that the currency you are holding is counterfeit, it is not only forbidden to use it, you are required to destroy it (Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 227:18). It would seem to me that it is permitted to turn the counterfeit item over to the authorities for investigation and enforcement.

Calculated profit

According to what we have said until now, a person is obligated to know the market value of a product that he is selling, and he will violate onaah if he sells it at a price that is clearly, significantly above the market price. Does this mean that someone must

be aware of the fluctuations in market price of items he is selling at every moment? Is there any way one can avoid having to be constantly aware of the market values of the items he is selling?

Yes, there is. It is halachically permitted to do the following: A seller may tell the purchaser, "This is the cost at which I acquired this item, and I add this percentage for my profit margin. Therefore, I arrive at this particular price" (Bava Metzia 51b as explained by Rambam, Hilchos Mechirah 13:5; Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 227:27).

(3) No recourse

Previously, I mentioned a third type of onaah in which a person is aware that he is being overcharged, but circumstances force him to pay more than he should for the item. There are several examples of this. One is when a business or cartel creates a monopoly and then raises prices because they control the market. Since the halachos germane to this situation are somewhat complicated, I will leave this topic for a different time.

Another example is when someone has a serious need for a product now – and the seller takes unfair advantage, insisting on a price that is well beyond what the item should fetch. For example, someone needs a medicine and can find it only in a certain drugstore, which decides to increase the price tenfold, simply to gain huge, unfair profit. This is forbidden.

Was the seller wrong?

I once purchased a four-volume reprint of an old, very hard-to-read edition of a relatively rare sefer. Subsequently, I discovered that the sefer had been reprinted in a beautiful format, information that the bookdealer must surely have known. Had I known that the new edition existed, no doubt I would have purchased it instead. I will leave my readers with the following question: Was the bookdealer permitted to sell me the old edition without telling me that a new one exists? Does this qualify, halachically, as insider trading or deception, and is it therefore prohibited as onaah?

Conclusion:

The Gemara tells us that the great tanna Rabbi Yehoshua, the rebbe of Rabbi Akiva, was asked: "What is the best means to become wealthy?" Rabbi Yehoshua advised that, aside from being very careful in one's business dealings, the most important factor is to daven to He Who owns all wealth (Niddah 70b). A Jew must realize that Hashem's Torah and His awareness and supervision of our fate are all-encompassing. Making this realization an integral part of our thinking is the true benchmark of how His kedusha influences our lives.

<https://torah.org/learning/is-israel-palestine/>

Is Israel Palestine?

JewishAnswers.org |

Question: I am Christian and have visited several different churches in the past few years. I often hear Israel referred to as Palestine. What's going on here? I don't find such reference in the Old Testament in my bible other than referencing the Philistines. Your opinion please.

Answer: Thanks for the question. It's a good one. I didn't know that American churches were commonly referring to the Land of Israel, the Holy Land, as Palestine.

As you say, the Bible speaks of the ancient Philistines, or Filistin, or Plishtim (in Biblical Hebrew). To call someone a "philistine" is to call that person crude, uncultivated, bad mannered, and, particularly, insensitive to art and culture. The term comes from the Bible's depiction of the Philistines, who were notoriously insensitive to Torah.

Ancient sailors called the coastland of Israel Philistia, after the people who lived on the Mediterranean coast. In fact, ancient

Philistia had been devastated, first by Samson, who destroyed the cream of Philistia, the nobles and leaders, gathered in the Dogon (fish-god) temple that Samson brought down; then by Israel's kings Saul and David, when the Jews or Hebrews finally destroyed the Philistines' local monopoly on ironworking (the Bible describes this), and organized militarily against the Philistines, and by David's successors. They still inhabited the coast, though; finally, in the time of the Maccabees, the Syrian-Greek empire's agents rounded up most of the surviving Philistines, their allies, plundered their cities, and sold them into slavery – to help pay for their several unsuccessful but enormously costly campaigns against the Jews. By Roman times the proud Philistine cities, Aza (Gaza), Ashkelon, and some others I can't remember, were just a bunch of ruins.

After the several Roman-Jewish wars, the ancient Romans tried to erase even the memory of Israel, so they changed the name of Judea to Philistina – in fact, to Felix Philistina, Happy Philistia. What made Philistia so happy was, supposedly, the absence of Jews (and the abject state of the Jews who were there, crushed in war, defeated and then deliberately impoverished further). From then on, the Romans referred to the Holy Land, not just on maps but in diplomatic and all sort of legal documents, as Philistia.

Israel's prophets promised that w/out Jews the Holy Land would "enjoy its rest" and empty out, and that is indeed what happened. Except for a brief period, about 20 years, in the time of Genghis Khan, when almost the whole land was all but completely abandoned, the Jews never left the land, but their numbers were always small and they lived as a subject people, no longer the masters of the country.

"Arab" comes from the Arabic for "wanderer" or "vagabond." They regarded the land as "the Jews' land" [eretz shel yehudit], which they also believed to be full of ghosts – Jewish ghosts – and cursed. America's Mark Twain visited around 1870 and saw it the same way – as a barren has-been of a land, a desert, poor and unhealthy, almost empty of people. He asked, "Can the curse of the Deity improve a land?" (The Innocents Abroad – New York, c. 1876). The Ottoman Turkish empire governed the land – interestingly, as a department of Syria, with its capitol in Damascus, while the department capitol was Ramallah – the Muslim Turks and Arabs didn't care that much for Jerusalem. As for the benefits of Turkish rule, the Arabs have a saying: "In the footsteps of the Turk, no grass grows."

In the last third of the 19th century the modern Zionist movement began. When young, mostly secular-minded Jews began returning to the Land in the late 19th and early 20th century, they called themselves Palestinians – to distinguish themselves not just from other Jews but from the local Turks and Arabs, who regarded themselves as (wait for it) Turks and Arabs. The Jews' institutions had Palestine in their names – the

Palestine Savings Bank, the Palestine Post (now the Jerusalem Post) – and the American newspapers, both mainstream and Jewish, called the Jewish, Zionist emissaries from Israel "Palestinians." Only in 1948, when "Jewish Palestine" won independence from the British, the parts of the British Mandate Territory of Palestine that the Jews could hang onto became Israel, and the Palestinians – who were at that time all Jewish – became Israelis.

Sometime in the 1960's the name Palestinian began to be applied to the Arabs of the Holy Land. I've heard that it was an extreme left-wing Jewish idea-man who came up with the idea, but who knows? At any rate, in 1964 a small group of Christian Arab Marxists and other secularists, along with some Muslim and Muslim-descended secular radicals, took the name Palestine Liberation Organization, and they began calling themselves and the other non-Jews in the area, whether Arab or not, Palestinians.

Ever since, we have been hearing about "the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people" – just as though there were such a people as the Palestinians (as opposed to vying tribes and clans that detest each other spread around Gaza and Judea and Samaria (the West Bank of the Jordan River), in United Nations' supported 60-year old plus "refugee camps," and throughout the world. According to Hamas, as well as the Palestine Liberation Organization, every non-Jew (or is it only Arabs) who 1) lives in the area, or ever lived in the Arab, or who had a single parent who ever lived in the area, is a Palestinian.

Why do these churches prefer to call the land Palestine instead of Israel? Because they prefer the narrative of a struggling third-world people who were cruelly disposed of their incredibly rich land by the perfidious colonialist and racist Jews and their fat-cat capitalist allies to the truth.

Thank you for your question. For more on the subject, you might want to go to our First Covenant website – it's made for non-Jews, or Noahides, who want to know more about the Universal laws that make up the core of the Hebrew Biblical Tradition, and about the role of non-Jews in the Hebrew Prophecy and Torah – and our articles that address it. [_Click here: First Covenant Articles](#). Scroll down to the articles under the subject heading, From Genesis to 9/11, Islam, Israel, and Amalek. Believe it or not, you'll find some pieces there that go directly to your question.

I hope this helps.

Michael Dallen

Question: Are Jews offended by this or am I being overly sensitive?? When I hear Palestine, I always think of Arafat and the PLO and wonder if others do too. ?

Answer: Thanks again, your question shows real empathy. For me too, and a lot of other Jewish people, the use of the word Palestine for the Holy Land instead of Israel suggests a preference for the propaganda of Israel's Arab enemies, and

other anti-Semites, over truth. For example, a Nazi doctor, one of Dr. Mengele's associates, who had the habit of searching out identical twins among the Jews who went through Auschwitz and murdering them just to get their skulls, for display, was just found to have died a few years ago in Egypt; he left behind diaries and letters in which he railed against what he called the vile injustices perpetrated by Israel against the true owners of the Land, "the suffering Palestinians." (Who would have thought that a mass murderer like that would be so concerned with human suffering, or with "justice"?) To him, and Nazis generally, it's always Palestine, never Israel. Naturally, not everyone who calls it Palestine and speaks of Palestinians hates Israel. Some people call it Palestine to refer to the entire Land of Israel, including most of Jordan, southern Lebanon, southern Syria, and of course Judea and Samaria (the West Bank of the Jordan River), as well as Gaza. The entire Holy Land, while still small in relative terms (it would fit easily inside several Texas COUNTIES, or within one of the smaller American states, like New Jersey or Vermont), includes a lot more than just "Green Line Israel." And, so long as the State of Israel's political leaders keep insisting that most of the Land really belongs to Israel's Arab enemies, someone who calls it Palestine may just be referring to the whole land: Metropolitan Israel, you might say, including Israel and everything that the Bible calls Eretz Yisroel – the Land of Israel.

Oddly, to me, even some folks who insist that the whole Land of Israel belongs to the People of Israel often seem to forget that the Jews' relationship to the land isn't just one of privilege, or rights of ownership, but of obligation, including a direct responsibility to God, the Creator of the Universe, to rid the land of horrible, offensive-to-God, anti-Torah practices and anti-Torah people, too. Israel's obligation to "Palestine" is to turn it, under G'd, into an exemplary country including an exemplary society, a Jewish society, to make the godly, "higher-consciousness" principles of Torah operational in the world, for the good not just of Jews or Israel but the whole of humankind – including, incidentally, the entire Arab Nation. Michael Dallen

from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org> date: Nov 9, 2023

WE CANNOT BE SILENT: A CALL TO ACTION

Rabbi Moshe Hauer | NOVEMBER 7, 2023

Once again, the threat is not a Jewish problem. It is a human problem. There are moments when we cannot be silent. When our voices need to be heard for Am Yisrael, Eretz Yisrael, for American Jewry and for America itself.

On **October 6, 1943**, three days before Yom Kippur, 400 Orthodox rabbis arrived in the nation's capital to participate in a march calling attention to the plight of the Jews of Europe. It was the season of teshuvah and the time when our tefillos are best received, b'himatzo,

yet these rabbanim chose to dedicate some of that sacred time to the decidedly nonspiritual activity of lobbying in Washington.

They understood that in this world we must raise our voices both to the heavens and to the humanly powerful. America was the country best positioned to stand up to the existential threat facing the Jewish People, and they needed to make every effort to raise their voices and activate its leadership. And, in the words of William Randolph Hearst, the threat was not a Jewish problem. It was a human problem. Eighty years later, world Jewry faces what are arguably the most serious threats it has faced since the Holocaust. On October 7, Israel was brutally attacked, hundreds of its citizens taken hostage, and continues to face existential threats on multiple fronts. In America and the world over, the attacks and their aftermath unleashed a surging and shocking wave of anti-Semitism that has engulfed the universities and the streets of many of our cities, creating genuine fear for the future of the Jews in this blessed country. Jews have opened their hearts with extra tefillos after every minyan, via their WhatsApp chats, in the middle of their day's work, and at innumerable communal tefillah gatherings. Along with tefillah, there has been an outpouring of tzedakah and meaningful teshuvah, reflecting on communal failures of machlokes and more. In a sense, the Yamim Nora'im of 5784 have not yet ended.

Yet once again we need to interrupt our spiritual efforts and go to Washington. Once again, it is America that is best positioned to offer human protection and support the Jewish People, in both Israel and America. It has been doing so, but it needs to keep at it, and we need to make every effort to raise our voices and activate its leadership to act even more decisively. We cannot be silent. Once again, the threat is not a Jewish problem. It is a human problem.

On Tuesday, November 14, at 1 p.m., on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., there will be a mass rally in support of the Jews of Israel and America and insisting on freedom for the hundreds held hostage. Tens of thousands of voices will be raised in unison to stand for truth and for life and to chase away the darkness that has been spreading over our world. We all need to be there.

Anu ratzim v'heim ratzim. We march and others march. The streets of Washington — like the streets of every major city — have played host to many protestors in the past month. But we will march differently from them. Ours will not be a call for death or elimination, but a plea for life and peace. While others filled the streets with ugliness and bloodcurdling chants calling for our extermination, "from the river to the sea," we will advocate for life and peace, for the freedom of innocent hostages, for Israel's right to defend itself from those who continuously seek to destroy it, and for the freedom to live in this country without hatred and threats.

The kol Yaakov, the Jewish voice, has been defined and refined by hours of humble prayer to Hashem. That same voice, when raised toward the human powers that be, will do so with firm resolve and with its characteristically humble refinement. We will raise our eyes to Hashem and our voices to man and we will daven with all our hearts that our efforts be effective, that Hashem will direct the hearts of the leaders of this country to show compassion and respect to the Jews of America and to the government of Israel, allowing us all to live in safety and security, u'va l'Tziyon go'eil v'nomar amen.

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