

מברכים

Chayei Sara is the 54th day (of 354); the 8th Shabbat (of 50) of 5766

מברכים

...אֲזוּתֵנוּ אֶת הַיָּי לְאַלְפֵי רַבְבָּה וַיִּירֶשׁ זְרַעָה אֶת פְּעַר שֵׁנְאִיו: בר' כד:נט

# Eliezer: B'seder or Not?

The Gemara has (at least) two things to say about the way Eliezer, servant of Avraham asked G-d for a sign that he found a suitable shiduch for Yitzchak. In Masechet Taanit (4a), R' Shmuel bar Nachmani in the name of R' Yochanan says that three people did not ask properly, two were answered well notwithstanding and the third was not answered well... Eliezer said... if I will ask a girl for water and she will give me and my camels... that will be the one for Yitzchak. Says the Gemara, it could have been an unsuitable girl, but G-d sent him Rivka.

And in Chulin (95b): Any NACHASH (asking for a sign) that is not like what Eliezer (or Yonatan son of Shaul), is not NACHASH. Rambam interprets this the Gemara stating that Eliezer's sign is the epitome of the prohibition against relying on omens. Others understand the Gemara exactly the opposite, that Eliezer's sign was okay, acceptable, and could be relied upon. Rashi seems to disagree with Rambam; he says that Eliezer's test was to find a kind girl who would be worthy of becoming part of Avraham's family.

The questions remain: was Eliezer's request of G-d proper or not? And is it forbidden because of NICHUSH? These are not identical questions, but they can combine to the simpler question - Was Eliezer B'seder or not?

It seems that "blind" reliance on a test of the sort that Eliezer made, is problematic. However, as a filtering process, it seems to be on track. And Eliezer did check into family background, so to speak, albeit after he committed himself to Rivka.

Rabbi Steven Burg, National Director of NCSY, added an important factor to further justify Eliezer's test. In a Dvar Torah on www.OURadio.org (the OU's internet radio station - check it out), Rabbi Burg pointed to the words VATMAHEIR (and

## Word of the Month



A weekly feature of Torah Tidbits to help clarify practical and conceptual aspects of the Jewish Calendar, thereby better fulfilling the mitzva of HaChodesh HaZeh Lachem...

**This Shabbat we bench Rosh Chodesh, which will be on Friday.**

**FYI, Rosh Chodesh Kislev has more options than any other month. It can be... SUN, Su/M, TUE, Tu/W, THU, Th/F, FRI.**



**7 possibilities - but never on Shabbat.**

ראש חודש בסלו יהיה ביום ששי  
הבא עלינו ועל כל ישראל למובה:

The MOLAD takes place THU (Dec.1)  
12h 16m 14p (11:56am Israel time)

המולד יהיה ביום המישוי שש עשרה דקות  
וארבעה עשר חלקים אחרי שתיים עשרה.

ה' יהושב: In Rambam notation:

Actual (astronomical) molad  
(new moon) is Thu. Dec. 1, 5:01pm

**www.radiou.org**  
and  
**www.israelnationalradio.com**  
New shows from Thursday

**OTHER Z'MANIM**  
Correct for Jerusalem

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**Candle Lighting and HAVDALA**  
Standard (Winter) time

Correct for TT 692 • Rabbeinu Tam (I'm) - 5:52pm	
<b>4:01pm</b>	Jerusalem <b>5:15pm</b>
4:16pm	Raanana 5:16pm
4:16pm	Beit Shemesh 5:16pm
4:15pm	Netanya 5:16pm
4:17pm	Rehovot 5:17pm
3:56pm	Petach Tikva 5:16pm
4:16pm	Modi'in 5:16pm
4:18pm	Be'er Sheva 5:18pm
4:16pm	Gush Etzion 5:15pm
4:15pm	Ginot Shomron 5:15pm
4:01pm	Maale Adumim 5:15pm
4:16pm	K4 & Hevron 5:16pm
4:07pm	Tzfat 5:12pm

Ranges are FRI-FRI 23 Ch. - 1 Kis. (Nov 25 - Dec 2)

Earliest Talit & T'filin - 5:23-5:28am
Sunrise - 6:16-6:22am
Sof Z'man K' Sh'ma - 8:51-8:55am (8:04-8:07am)
Sof Z'man T'fila - 9:42-9:46am (9:11-9:14am)
Chatzot (halachic noon) - 11:26-11:28½am
Mincha Gedola (earliest Mincha) - 11:57-11:59am
Plag Mincha - 3:32-3:32pm
Sunset - 4:41-4:40pm (4:36-4:35pm)

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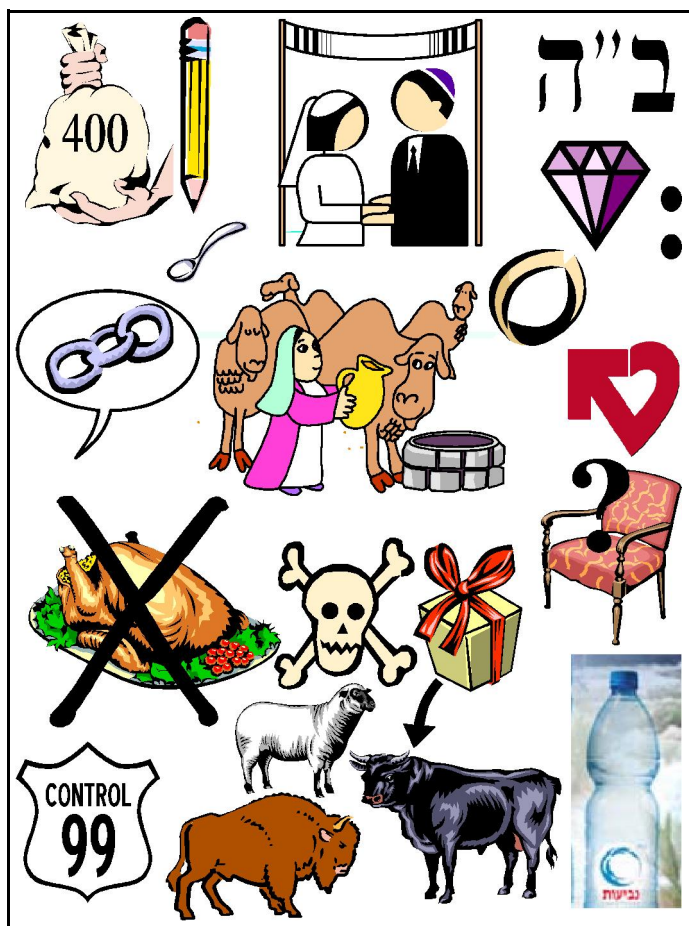
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In the Wolinetz Family Shul  
OHEL SHMUEL (entrance floor)  
**Shabbat afternoon Shiur**  
3:00pm, followed by Mincha  
at 4:00pm  
**Yaacov Peterseil & Co.**

she hurried) and VATARATZ (and she ran) as indicators of a passion and enthusiasm to help others. This is an Avraham-trait (RATZ, VAY'MAHEIR), justifying Eliezer's act.



## CHAYEI SARA STATS

5th of the Torah's 54 sedras; 5th of 12 in B'reishit

Written on 171 lines in a Sefer Torah, rank 37th  
4 Parshiyot; 3 open, 1 closed

105 p'sukim - ranks 32nd (11th in B'reishit)  
same as D'varim (which is longer)

1402 words - ranks 37th (11th in B'reishit)

5314 letters - ranks 36th (11th in B'reishit)

Shorter than average p'sukim

## MITZVOT:

None of Taryag are from Chayei Sara

This week's TTriddles:

- [1] Avraham : Sara : : Ido : whom?
- [2] Among many others, only these... Ada, Hagar, Sara (twice), Bilha, Zilpa, Rachel, Ada, Maacha
- [3] Nine extroverts in the beginning
- [4] Avraham, Yehoshua, David
- [5] At least twenty million
- [6] the Zodiac TTriddle
- [7] Two unexplained elements in the ParshaPix

## Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma respectively. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

### Kohen - First Aliya - 16 p'sukim - 23:1-16

[P> 23:1 (20)] The parsha begins by telling us that Sara died in Kiryat Arba, which is Hevron. But first it tells us that she lived a full, long life of 127 years.

**SDT** *With the last theme of Vayeira being the AKEIDA, the juxta- position of Sara's death supports our Tradition that Sara died as a result of the Akeida. The Midrash says that the Satan informed Sara about what Avraham was intending to do with Yitzchak, when they went towards Har HaMoriah. The shock was too great for an old woman, and she died. Some commentaries give an interest- ing twist to this episode. They say that Sara expired, not from fear that Avraham was to offer Yitzchak as a Korban, but that he might not! She remembered Avraham's reaction when she told him to banish Yishmael (and Hagar). She was afraid that Avraham's love and kindness towards Yitzchak would prevent him from carrying out G-d's command, and that Avraham would thus fail this ultimate test. When she saw (or heard) that Avraham was returning with Yitzchak still alive, she thought her fears were realized and she died.*

Avraham comes (some say from the Akeida, that is from Har HaMoriah; some say from Be'er Sheva; either way, it was apparently to Hevron that he came) to eulogize Sara and to cry for her.

**SDT** *V'LIVKOTAH, and to cry for her, is written with a small KAF. Some take this as a reminder that the crying was "small" since Sara had lived such a long life (Baal HaTurim). There is more crying when a person dies young. Some say that the KAF points to the 20 in the way that the Torah tells us how old she was when she died: 100 years and 20 years and 7 years. Others say that the small KAF allows us to reread the word with regular-sized letters only to obtain a different understanding, on a REMEZ (hint) level. And Avraham came to eulogize Sara UL-VITAH, and her daughter. This correlates with the opinions that Avraham and Sara had a daughter, but she died when Sara did. (Some say that her name was BAKOL.) Not everyone agrees.*

Avraham next makes the arrangements for providing a suitable place to bury Sara. (There is a Tradition that Avraham was aware of the burial place of Adam and Chava, and that is the piece of land he was interested in.) He turns to the people of CHEIT, one of whom is known as EFRON. They all exchange niceties and the people offer Avraham any land he wants. He insists on paying and that is what he does for the field and cave of Machpela.

**Pirkei Avot** made famous that Avraham was tested 10 times. But we are not told what the ten tests are. And there different opinions as to which of Avraham's experiences are considered tests of his faith. Most lists of the 10 end with the Akeida, as implied from the p'sukim themselves. Rabeinu Yona finds a test after

the Akeida — Avraham's experience in providing a burial place for Sara. What was so difficult about that, that it should qualify as a test of faith - especially after the Akeida? Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that after the Akeida, Avraham still had a couple of difficult things to go through. Wasn't the Akeida and everything that preceded it enough? No, not finished yet. This can test a person, some- times, more than terrible trials and tribulations.

Surviving the Holocaust did not guarantee a person that he would have an easy life from then on. Some were blessed with trouble-free lives after their terrible ordeals, but most had many more difficulties to face in the years to come.

We do not know how G-d works. Why must we suffer trials and tribulations in this world? It has something to do with making us better people. With challenging us. With testing us. With preparing our souls for the World of Truth. And probably a lot more.

There is another approach to answer the same question. Eulogizing his wife, acquiring a burial place, finding a "shiduch" for Yitzchak - even remarrying Hagar (Ketura) are all "regular", mundane experiences. Can one who spoke repeatedly to G-d, ascended Har HaMori'ah, had a special relationship with G-d - can such a person return to being a "normal" human being? This too is a test, and Avraham passed with flying colors. These commentaries point to the pasuk, "And Avraham return to the lads..." as an indication that he was able to "come back down to earth".

**SDI** *If a father insists that his son marry or not marry a particular woman, the son is not duty-bound to listen to his father. Meshech Chochma says that we learn this from the fact that Avraham gave instructions and administered an oath to Eliezer about a wife for Yitzchak, but did not command Yitzchak himself on the matter.*

## **Levi - Second Aliya - 13 p'sukim - 23:17-24:9**

The field, cave, trees, etc. become the lawful possessions of Avraham, after which he buries Sara.

**[S> 24:1 (67)]** Avraham is now at an advanced age and has been blessed greatly by G-d.

"And G-d blessed Avraham BAKOL", with everything.

The word BAKOL screams out for explanation. And, sure enough, there are many suggestions as to what this extra blessing of BAKOL is. (Everytime we say Birkat HaMazon, we ask G-d to bless us as He blessed our forefathers - BAKOL... Mikol and Kol are terms associated with Yitzchak and Yaakov.)

The numeric value of BAKOL 52, the same as BEN, son. This alludes to the ultimate blessing that Avraham received - his son Yitzchak.

R. Meir says that Avraham was blessed by not having a daughter. In Avra- ham's time and in his unique circumstances, who would she have married? What would have happened to her? In this case it was a bracha not to have had a daughter.

On the other hand... R. Yehuda says that Avraham's extra blessing was that he DID have a daughter. There is even an opinion that his daughter's name was BAKOL.

Rabbi Eliezer HaModai says that Avraham was blessed

with the art/skill /power of astrology and that he was consulted by noblemen from far and wide. (Even when G-d told Avraham that he would have a child, Avraham resisted because he had seen in the stars that he was not going to have children. G-d "explained" to Avraham that it is possible to rise above one's "mazel", and in fact, that is the special quality of the nation that will come from him. **אין מזל לישראל**. Ibn Ezra says in the name of our Sages z"l, true, but only as long as they keep the Torah.)

R. Shimon bar Yochai says that Avraham had a precious stone with curative powers that would heal all who gazed upon it.

These last two opinions identify BAKOL as Avraham's prominent position in the world. This fits with his role as "father of many nations".

Some suggest that Eisav's not sinning (until Avraham died) and Yishmael's repentance, both during Avraham's lifetime are the extra blessings.

There are still other explanations.

From the variety of explanations of BAKOL, it is quite clear that Avraham's unique status as the one who restored belief in One G-d to the world did not go unrewarded. We can see in this list of blessings, all the different kinds of blessings that can be ours, the spiritual heirs of Avraham Avinu.

The one major task remaining, which will forge the next vital link in what promises to be a great people and a great Chain of Tradition, is finding a suitable "shiduch" for Yitzchak. Everything now will depend upon Yitzchak. However great Avraham was, unless there is "solid" continuity, all will be lost. To this end, Avraham calls upon Eliezer to swear that he will faithfully carry out his task, that he will return to Avraham's family and hometown, and find a wife for Yitzchak there. And that Yitzchak is not to leave Eretz Yisrael (having been consecrated on the Mizbei'ach during the Akeida).

## **Shlishi - Third Aliya - 17 p'sukim - 24:10-26**

Eliezer (who is exclusively referred to as "The Servant", as opposed to by name - his name never appears in Parshat Chayeí Sara, where we would have considered him a major character) takes ten camels laden with a splendid assortment of goods and, travels to Avraham's hometown. Upon arrival, he ties the camels up near the well, towards evening, at the time that the local girls come to draw water. He asks G-d to be kind to his master Avraham. Eliezer asks for a sign - the girl who will offer him drink and also for his camels, she will be the one sent by G-d. Almost before he finished speaking, Rivka bat Betu'el of Avra- ham's family arrives on the scene with her water container on her shoulder. Eliezer runs to her and asks for a bit of water. She immediately gives him his fill and then draws water for his camels. Anxious to find out whether she was "the one", Eliezer waits until the camels have their drink and then presents Rivka with gifts of jewelry. (On the one hand, he has seen her kind nature and tireless act of chesed; on the other hand, he has not even asked her who she is.) When Rivka tells

Eliezer that she is indeed from Avraham's family and invites him to stay at her home, he prostrates himself before G-d in grateful acknowledgment.

## **R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya - 26 p'sukim - 24:27-52**

Eliezer also says a blessing to G-d for not abandoning Avraham or withholding Divine Kindness from him. Rivka runs home to tell her family what has happened. Lavan (filled with ulterior motives, our commentaries tell us) runs to greet Eliezer. The gold jewelry adorning Rivka catches Lavan's eye, and he "graciously" offers Eliezer hospitality. Eliezer is served food but refuses to eat until his "business" is completed.

Eliezer proceeds to tell the story of his mission. He tells of Avraham and Yitzchak and of being sent to find a wife for Yitzchak. When he asks for Rivka's hand on behalf of his master, Lavan and Betu'el (commentaries point to Lavan's pushing himself before his father as an indication of a negative personality trait) accept all as G-d's will.

Eliezer again prostrates himself before G-d in grateful acknowledgment of the success of his mission.

## **Chamishi - Fifth Aliya - 15 p'sukim - 24:53-67**

Eliezer gives more gifts to Rivka and her mother and brother, then they all celebrate with food and drink, and Eliezer and his party stay overnight. In the morning, Eliezer asks his leave. Rivka's family asks that she remain for a while but Eliezer insists on leaving immediately. Rivka is consulted and she agrees to leave right away. They send her off with a "maid" (later identified as Devora) and bless her. (This blessing has been repeated countless times to Jewish brides throughout the generations. Ironic, is it not, that we use Lavan's words for such a special occasion.) Finally the entourage leaves for Canaan.

Meanwhile, Yitzchak (having gone to bring Hagar back to Avraham) is in the Negev area and goes "into the field to commune, before evening". (This, we are taught, was the model for Mincha.) As the Rivka-Eliezer caravan approaches from a distance, Rivka sees Yitzchak, jumps down from her camel, and asks Eliezer who that man is. She covers her face with a veil when she is told that the man is her intended husband.

Eliezer tells Yitzchak everything that has occurred. Yitzchak takes Rivka as his wife and she becomes a comfort to him for the loss of his mother. For us, she later becomes Rivka Imeinu.

Rabbi Sholom Gold speculates as to how a girl growing up in the house of Betuel and Lavan can so quickly step into Sara Imeinu's shoes. His answer (beautifully developed in a shiur - to which we cannot do justice in so short a space) is that it was D'vorah, Rivka's nursemaid, who was her teacher and influence in the ways of Sara. D'vorah was left behind for just this purpose.

## **Shishi - Sixth Aliya - 11 p'sukim - 25:1-11**

**[P> 25:1 (11)]** Avraham, having successfully provided for the continuity of what will become the Jewish Nation, now lives out the remainder of his life as a "private citizen". He takes for himself a wife named KETURA (which we are taught was HAGAR) and fathers six more children. He gives them gifts, but Yitzchak remains Avraham's exclusive spiritual heir. (We can really say that in some ways, other peoples of the world followed Avraham's lead in living monotheistic lives, but the Torah's definition of Avraham's lineage is Yitzchak.)

On the question of the different treatment of Yishmael (banishment) and the children from Ketura (gifts), RZD explains that there was a crucial difference between Yishmael and Ketura's children. Yishmael challenged Yitzchak's heritage. He claimed (and in some ways continues to claim) Avraham's legacy. When G-d told Avraham to listen to Sara, He told him to banish them, BECAUSE in Yitzchak will be called your offspring, your descendants. This point had to be made, and a farewell party and lavish provisions for the journey would not have made the point. No such problem with Ketura's children. They made no such claim. They did not dispute Yitzchak's role. They received gifts.

Avraham dies at the "ripe old age" of 175 (actually, this is 5 years short of the complete 180 that Yitzchak achieved - various reasons are given for the "lost" 5 years). His was a graceful, good, and fulfilling life (despite the tough times he had). He is buried in the Cave of Machpela, where he had buried Sara. Both Yitzchak and Yishmael take care of the burial. The Torah implies that Yishmael had repented his ways and had become righteous. What greater joy for a father!

G-d blesses Yitzchak after Avraham's death.

*From the fact that Avraham took Ketura only after Yitzchak was married, the Baal HaTurim says that this is the proper thing to do - Marry off your children, before you yourself remarry.*

## **Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya - 7 p'sukim - 25:12-18**

**[P> 25:12 (7)]** The descendants of Yishmael are now enumerated. Yishmael is identified fully as the son of Avraham and Hagar the Egyptian maiden of Sara who bore Yishmael "to Avraham". (This is quite parallel to the description of Yitzchak's "connection" to Avraham as stated in the beginning of next week's sedra. This might further indicate Yishmael's Tshuva in his later years.) It is noteworthy that Yishmael fathered twelve sons, not like Yitzchak, but like Yaakov. Note that both Nachor and Yishmael had their 12 descendants before we did (so to speak). This indicates a tougher life for the Jewish people (something that has been borne out over and over again in the course of Jewish History, right up to current events).

Yishmael dies at the age of 100 and 30 and 7 years. The wording in the Torah (seemingly) purposely parallels that

which was used to describe Sara's lifespan, a further indication (perhaps) of the change for the better in Yishmael. Rashi says that the age of Yishmael is included to help us compute the chronology of Yaakov.

The last 3 p'sukim are reread for the Maftir.

## **Haftara - 31 p'sukim - Melachim Alef - 1:1-31**

The sedra tells of the aging Avraham and his task in providing for the continuity of his beliefs through his son Yitzchak (even though there were other potential heirs). The Haftara parallels this theme by telling us of the aging King David with many potential heirs, providing that it would be his son Shlomo who would be the next link in the Davidic line. This, fulfillment of a promise made to Shlomo's mother, Batsheva - similar to the promise made to Sara that her son would inherit. The starting points are Avraham Avinu and David Hamelech. But no matter how strong their personalities were, the chain ends with them unless the next generation is as strong as a Yitzchak Avinu and a Shlomo Hamelech.

## **THE JERUSALEM INSTITUTE OF JEWISH LAW - Rabbi Emanuel Quint, Dean**

Lesson # 308

### **Damaging Worthless Property**

There are times that a person might have in his possession objects that halacha declares must be destroyed because of the dangers that they pose. Since halacha or Beth Din order such object to be destroyed, for all intents and purposes they are valueless and must be destroyed. However, the owner of the objects is reserved the right to destroy them himself, which entails his performing a commendable act, a mitzva. Assume that Reuven without authorization from Shimon destroys Shimon's prohibited object. Obviously Shimon has not suffered any material loss; however, he has suffered the loss of being able to perform a mitzva. As in the past, I will be discussing our famous "ox", the same ox, who through the millenniums has so much been discussed by the sharpest and most learned minds in the world, the teachers and students of the Talmud.

We begin with the law that one may not maintain a dangerous object. An owner of a dangerous ox, that is, an ox that gores and injures people, may not be maintained, but the owner must have the ox slaughtered. If there is a tree growing on Shimon's property close to the public street and it looks like it is about to fall on pedestrians passing by; Shimon must cut the tree down. If Shimon has a wild rabid dog that threatens people he must put the dog down. If Shimon has a ladder the rungs of which are weak, possibly causing one using the ladder to fall and be injured, Shimon must fix the ladder. Should someone borrow the ladder, Shimon might forget to inform the borrower that the ladder needs repairs and borrower will injure himself climbing up the ladder. In these and in similar situations, Beth Din may indeed warn Shimon to slaughter the ox, chop down the tree, get rid of the dog, or fix the ladder, since these are dangerous and may cause injury to others. The concept of eliminating dangerous objects is derived from the Torah verse: "If you build

a house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, so that you will not place blood in your house if a fallen one falls from it" (D'varim 22:8). If Shimon, the owner, fails to heed the admonition of Beth Din to remedy the situation, any other person must do so to eliminate the danger on Shimon's property. The owner of the property is given priority in eliminating the object; it is prohibited for another person to eliminate the danger if the owner wants to do so. The owner may want to perform the meritorious act of eliminating the danger.

Assume that Reuven slaughtered the dangerous ox, got rid of the rabid dog, or repaired the faulty ladder. Shimon may sue Reuven for depriving him of the mitzva. Beth Din must proceed by examining Shimon's background in the zealotness for performing mitzvot and inconvenience and expense that Shimon would have sustained had he performed the mitzva himself. If Beth Din finds that doing mitzvot is a very significant part of Shimon's life, then the penalty levied upon Reuven will be larger than if Shimon does not take the carrying out of mitzvot all that seriously. Reuven will also have to pay any loss incurred by Shimon if Reuven's act caused the loss. For example, Shimon might have had the ox slaughtered according to kashrut requirements, and the meat would be available to be eaten. If Reuven killed the ox not according to the ritual of kosher slaughtering then Shimon suffers a monetary loss (i.e. the difference between the cost of kosher meat and non-kosher meat) in addition to the loss of performing a mitzva. Beth Din is also to take into account whether Shimon had been able to slaughter the ox in accordance with kashrut requirements. If he could not, then he would have had to hire a ritual slaughterer, in which case Reuven will not have to pay for the loss of the mitzva to Shimon or for the difference in price between kosher and non-kosher meat. All of the foregoing assumes that Shimon is zealous in performing mitzvot. However, if he is slovenly in performing mitzvot and is delaying slaughtering this dangerous ox, he Reuven should be praised rather than penalized for slaughtering the ox. If anything, Beth Din should penalize Shimon for possessing a dangerous instrumentality.

What has been said regarding the mitzva of eliminating a dangerous situation applies to all mitzvot, even those that do not involve danger. Some examples given in the codes are:

- (1) Shimon has a newborn son and he is to perform the mitzva of circumcising his son on the eighth day of his birth. Reuven, without consulting Shimon circumcises Shimon's son. Reuven must pay the penalty for depriving Shimon of the mitzva of circumcising his son. This assumes that Shimon was able and willing to circumcise his own son.
- (2) Shimon ritually slaughters a bird or beast and before he could perform the mitzva of covering the blood (which must be done in the case of slaughter of certain animals and all birds), Reuven covers up the blood.
- (3) Shimon is asked to perform the mitzva of leading the recitation of saying grace after a meal and is handed the cup of wine over which he will lead the grace. Reuven seizes the cup of wine and leads the grace.
- (4) In shul, Shimon is given the honor of being called to recite the blessing during the communal reading of the Torah. Reuven runs up in his place and quickly recites the blessing; there is no further opportunity to give a similar honor to Shimon on that day during the services.

Throughout the centuries since Talmudic times it has been the practice to have Beth Din assess the penalty in each case. When

Shimon sues Reuven in these types of cases, if Reuven pleads that Shimon told him to perform the mitzva, it will be a question for Beth Din to decide if Shimon really instructed Reuven to perform the mitzva. Nowadays there are no penalties meted out by Beth Din in these types of cases. Yet if Reuven deprives Shimon of the opportunity to perform a mitzva by rushing to perform it before Shimon can, Reuven's conduct is reprehensible. Society can examine each case and see if this is a course of conduct on Reuven's part and Beth Din can then place Reuven under bans until he ceases such conduct.

*The subject matter of this lesson is more fully discussed in volume X chapter 383 of A Restatement of Rabbinic Civil Law by E. Quint. Copies of all volumes can be purchased via email: orders@gefenpublishing.com and via website: www.israelbooks.com and at local Judaica bookstores. Questions to quint@inter.net.il*

## Meaning in Mitzvot

*Each week we discuss one familiar halakhic practice and try to show its beauty and meaning. The columns are based on Rabbi Meir's Meaning in Mitzvot on Kitzur Shulchan Arukh by*

### Rabbi Asher Meir

## Song of the Day

Each day in the Temple the Leviyim used to sing a particular chapter of T'hilim at the time of the wine libation in the morning and late afternoon. These songs are recorded in the mishna at the very end of tractate Tamid (7:4). The gemara (Rosh HaShana 31a) explains the choice of chapters by relating each day's song to the events of the corresponding day of creation. (A similar explanation is found in Avot d'Rebbe Natan 1:8.)

Rambam (Order of Prayers) mentions that some communities had a custom of saying each day's song after morning prayers, and today this custom is universal.

Actually, there is a dispute in the Yerushalmi if it is appropriate to recite these songs outside the time of the wine libation, at least in the Temple. Rebbe Yochanan asserts that it is permissible. His proof is that at the time of the destruction of the Temple, which tradition teaches was on a Sunday, the Leviyim sang the verse "And He shall return them according to their sin, and cut them off in their wickedness". This verse, which belongs to psalm 94 recited on Wednesdays, was used in this case as a lamentation over the tragedy of the destruction. But Resh Lakish asserts that the Leviyim merely sang "yesterday's song". (Yerushalmi Taanit 4:5. According to one explanation this means they made a mistake.)

Tractate Sofrim (18:1) presents us with Resh Lakish accepting Rebbe Yochanan's proof; the ruling continues: "Therefore, the people are accustomed to reciting these songs in their [respective] times."

This inference from Rebbe Yochanan is not obvious. It is true that Rebbe Yochanan asserts that we may recite the song of the day even without the wine libation. But Rebbe Yochanan also maintains that when we do so, we don't necessarily have to say the song customary for that day; rather, we may say a psalm appropriate to "current events", just as the Leviyim at the time of the destruction recited mournful verses appropriate to the tragic events. It seems that the message is that the particular commemoration of the stages of creation are suited to the days of the week inherently, and not only because this was the

custom in the time of the Temple. The stages of the creation of the world, culminating in the Shabbat, are also stages in our every-day existence: First, recognizing G'd's primacy (the message of chapter 24); then recognizing his involvement in the creation (the message of chapter 48); afterwards, recognizing that the basis of creation is justice among human beings (chapter 82); the recognition that only He is worthy of worship (chapter 94); that His sovereignty is beneficent for all creatures (chapter 81); and that man is the pinnacle of creation (chapter 93). Finally, we recognize that the world is subject to perfection and is destined to be perfected in the Shabbat of the World to Come (chapter 92).

While the passage from Sofrim explains the "song of the day" as a commemoration of the Temple service, the inference from Rebbe Yochanan, who makes a point of stating that the song is not inherently connected to the libations, seems to make the point that our recitation of the songs today is related especially to the ongoing unfolding of the stages of creation and the weekly cycle. This understanding is strengthened by the special introduction we say to each chapter: "Today is such-and- such a day of the week, on which the Leviyim used to say...". The commentators explain that this introduction is meant to remind us of Shabbat each day, so that we recall that each day stands in a particular relation towards the ultimate completion and perfection of the world.

*Rabbi Asher Meir has two wonderful books in print - Meaning in Mitzvot (ask for it at your local s'farim store) and The Jewish Ethicist, available at some bookstores and through the Business Ethics Center of Jerusalem, (02) 632-0222. Both works are highly recommended*

## TANACH

### SPIRITUAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES IN THE BEREISHIT STORIES by Dr. Meir Tamari

## HAGAR and YISHMAEL [3]

Many years have passed since Hagar returned to the tents of Avraham and Sara. Meanwhile, important changes in all their lives have occurred. In the interim, Ishmael had indeed been born and it seems as though the promise of son to inherit Avraham had been realized. Yet when Ishmael was thirteen years old, Avraham received his 5th revelation, one that added another dimension to the Nation-Land promise already extant, an heir to be born to Sara and to him.

Here, to the Chosen Nation-Land was for the first time added a mention of a religion and a mitzva; a Covenant whereby Hashem promises to be his G-d, and, Avraham and all his male descendants, for their part are to be circumcised. "Avraham undertook to be a partner with Hashem by completing and perfecting the work of Creation. First he would do so in the small world that is his own body through the Mila that multiplies the Divine and spiritual in that small world; for not only the orla of the male organ is to be removed but the orla of the heart, the orla of the ear and of the speech as well. Thereby all his actions and of the descendants promised to him, will increase the divine and spread the Shechina in the large world" (Malbim). It should be noted that there are only two things that have a din of Orla, trees and Man; both disobeyed G-d after Creation, Adam by eating of the Eitz Hada'at and the trees by not producing fruit that tasted like the tree (B'reishit 1:11-12).

This 5th revelation came to Avraham, as we learn from the

following sedra, when his tent was pitched in Alonei Mamre, so that his tent can be compared to that of Moshe's that was Ohel Moed, a place of meeting with G-d, as befits a revelation that commands him to "Walk before G-d and be tamim". Tamim is perfect: a person of complete faith in Hashem; one who seeks to emulate and cleave to "The Rock, perfect is His working, for all His ways are the Government of Justice, a G-d of confident faith and no misuse of power, Righteous and Straight is He" (D'varim 32:4). Avraham's descendants are commanded: "You shall be tamim with Hashem, your G-d" (D'varim 18:13).

"Tamim is without blemish, as in the Para Aduma" (Rivash) and Chazal saw Orla as a blemish that has to be removed. In this, Judaism differs radically from other faiths and philosophies. Everybody else seeks perfection through addition whereas we are taught that the way to achieve kedusha and perfection is through subtraction. So we subtract one day from the weekly pursuit of the secular; the fruit of our trees remain forbidden as orla till their fourth year; our land may not be worked every Shmita year; our money and wealth are reduced by our obligation to do charity and by legislation as to how and when we earn them; some foods are kosher but not others, and this also determines their preparation and when they can be eaten, rather than our appetites and our senses; through removing flesh from the male sex organ by mila and through the limitations of taharat hamishpacha we turn sex from mere physicality into holiness. It is understandable why, threatened by this way of achieving perfection, our persecutors throughout the ages, have attacked and forbidden Shabbat, Mila and Kashrut.

"Mila is called 'ot brit', the sign of the covenant, a constant and permanent reminder to walk in His ways, since we bear the brand of ownership of the Lord" (Sforno). Mezuzah is a similar sign of His mitzvot, a reminder that our homes are Jewish so that all we do in them are devoted to Him; yet it is a stationary sign that cannot be carried physically with us and so its influence may be weakened when we are out of our homes. Tefilin are another sign, more mobile but their spiritual message may be limited to the time that they are worn. Tzitzit are a sign that is less limited and more mobile than these two as we carry them in our clothes wherever we go; when the wife of Potifar saw that Yosef refused her, she tore his Jewish garment - tzitzit, considering correctly that the sight of them reminded him of G-d-given morality. Only mila is immobile, permanent and with us even when we are naked; "even in the most secretive and private place we are never free of His Presence" (Rama, Orech Chayim 1:1).

The development of the 5th revelation was accompanied by a change in the names of Avraham and Sara from Avram and Sarai. Berachot 13a, teaches that referring to Avraham as Avram transgresses a positive mitzva: Your name shall be Avraham. Alternatively there is the negative mitzva: Your name shall no longer be Avram. Though Yaakov was called Israel, it is permissible to use his original name. Basically, the two cases are ideologically different. The name Avram, originated from Terach the idolater, whereas Avraham was his G-d given name that severed him completely from his roots. However, Yaakov was the name given by pious parents; the new name was a sign of added spiritual growth" (Yalkut Yehuda).

"May Ishmael live before You": it is difficult to understand this reaction of Avraham's to the promise of a son and heir born to Sara. How could he refuse this promise in favor of the son of Hagar, the seed of accursed Ham? By what right did he waive, on Sara's behalf, the fulfillment of this Divine Promise that included her; had she not complained [B'reishit 16:5] about his

asking for a son but omitting to include her in his prayer?

'Be tamim' preceded Mila, so we learn that before Mila, Avraham was not perfect and complete. Avraham's merit was kiruv; unlimited kiruv can be a blemish, a blemish that has to be corrected by the ability to repulse that which is impure and wrong. By this lesson of Mila, Avraham could be 'tamim'.

It was by individual choice that Ishmael was circumcised so that he is judged by Midat HaDin; his share of the Divine Promise of the Land is conditional upon deserving behavior. Yitzchak's Mila was fully fulfillment of Hashem's commandment, an expression of unconditional faith and love for Him, so that Israel's claim is eternal and independent of their behavior". (Shem MiShmuel).

*This is the 104th installment in Dr. Tamari's series on "Tanach and its messages for our times"*

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[8] **From the desk of the director**

[1] From the virtual desk of the OU **VEBBE REBBE**

*The Orthodox Union – via its website – fields questions of all types in areas of kashrut, Jewish law and values. Some of them are answered by Eretz Hemdah, the Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, headed by Rav Yosef Carmel and Rav Moshe Ehrenreich, founded by HaRav Shaul Yisraeli zt"l, to prepare rabbanim and dayanim to serve the National Religious community in Israel and abroad. Ask the Rabbi is a joint venture of the OU, Yerushalayim Network, Eretz Hemdah... and the Israel Center. The following is a Q&A from Eretz Hemdah...*

**Q:** I make crafts and would like to sell them at an upcoming fair. However, the fair will take place on Shabbat and Sunday. A non-Jew is willing to sell them both days on consignment for a percentage of the sales. May she do this for me on Shabbat?

**A:** In a situation where a non-Jew will conduct commercial activity that involves a Jew's property on Shabbat, we have to ask a few questions. 1) Is the non-Jew working on the Jew's behalf or on his own? 2) Does the arrangement appear to the public to be one that is forbidden on Shabbat (mar'it ayin)? 3) Is the Jew improperly receiving financial benefit from work done on Shabbat?

### Work on the Jew's behalf

The main distinction that determines whether a non-Jew's activity with a Jew's property is permitted or forbidden is as follows (see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 243:1-2 and more).

If a Jew pays a non-Jew to do work on the basis of time (per month, day, hour, etc.) his work is considered on the Jew's behalf and forbidden. The salary is the impetus to follow the Jew's explicit or implicit directives. In contrast, if the non-Jew is paid by the job (katzatz), then we say that he is working on his own behalf in order to receive a share of benefit from his work and is permitted.

In your case, where the seller at the fair works for a percentage of the sales, she benefits directly from the sales. Thus, she would be working on her own behalf, not yours, even if you would benefit more than she. However, a problem remains. The Shulchan Aruch and Rama (OC 307:4) say, respectively, that one cannot give a non-Jew money to buy or merchandise to sell if he tells him to do so on Shabbat, even in a case of katzatz (see Mishna Berura 307:14).

Is your case like one of telling to sell on Shabbat? On one hand, you could refrain from telling her to sell on Shabbat. Although both of you would like her to sell on Shabbat, we can still say that she does so for her own gain. On the other hand, this may be a more severe case than those of the Shulchan Aruch and Rama. There, it sounds like there are a set number of items to be bought or sold. Thus, it is likely possible for the non-Jew to buy or sell them without doing so on Shabbat. The choice to do so on Shabbat is his. However, if it is unfeasible to sell all of the merchandise without selling on Shabbat, then it is arguably like telling him to sell on Shabbat. Magen Avraham (307:4) addresses a similar case. He says that one may not ask a non-Jew to buy something for him when the market day, which is the only logical time to obtain the object, is only on Shabbat.

In your case, it seems that you will meet the optimal scope of selling crafts only if the seller sells them for two days, including Shabbat. However, we have a strong indication that even when full profits can be met only with the help of the non-Jew's work on Shabbat, the Jew can allow the non-Jew to work in a case of katzatz. A bathhouse was classically operated by workers who were paid by time. Therefore, due to mar'it ayin, it was forbidden for a Jewish-owned bathhouse to be operated on Shabbat by a non-Jew even for a percentage of the income from admission (Shulchan Aruch, OC 243:1). However, in a place where katzatz is the norm, this practice is permitted (ibid.:2). This case is parallel to yours, as Shabbat's income cannot be made up on another day. We see that despite your desire that she sell on Shabbat and your gain from it, it is not considered like telling her to do so, if you do not require it of her.

**Marit Ayin** - This is not a problem if either your product is not publicly traceable to you by its label or a known feature or it is standard that sellers at the fair work for a percentage of the sales.

**Profits from Shabbat** - As long as the seller gives you the money in a lump sum without singling out money that was made on Shabbat, this is not a problem (Mishna Berura 245:8).

There are other possible ways to deal with these issues. However, we have sufficed to point out that under the normal circumstances we described, having a non-Jew sell the crafts for a percentage of the sales does not require special conditions.

*Ask the Rabbi Q&A is part of Hemdat Yamim, the weekly parsha sheet published by Eretz Hemdah. You can read this section or the entire Hemdat Yamim at [www.ou.org](http://www.ou.org) or [www.eretzhemdah.org](http://www.eretzhemdah.org). And/or you can receive Hemdat Yamim by email weekly, by sending an email to [info@eretzhemdah.org](mailto:info@eretzhemdah.org) with the message: Subscribe/English (for the English version) or Subscribe/Hebrew (for the Hebrew version). Please leave the*

*subject blank. Ask the Vebbe Rebbe is partially funded by the Jewish Agency for Israel*

## [2] **Candle by Day**

The prime prerequisite of an open mind is a closed mouth.

From A Candle by Day by Rabbi Shraga Silverstein

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## [3] **CHIZUK and IDUD**

(for Olim & not-yet-Olim respectively)

And Yitzchak went out to meditate in the field at evening time and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold camels were coming. -B'reishit 24:63.

The Rabbis say (Pesachim 88a) that Yitzchak went to meditate regarding the Sadeh (field) that is to say, he prayed concerning the Beit HaMikdash. "Lifnot Erev" at evening time i.e. He asked "Why have we been waiting so long for the Final Redemption?"

Yitzchak does not understand the cause of the delay. But then he lifted up his eyes and saw the camels coming. Seeing them he understood the cause of the delay.

Rav Dovid Moskowitz, in "Gelilei Zahav" explains that kosher animals require two signs - an external and an internal one. The internal one requires an animal to chew its cud while the external one requires the animal to have split hooves. The combination of both means that the animal is kosher.

So too, says Rav Moskowitz, in order to be a kosher Jew, both signs are required. The internal: faith, prayer and deveikut. The external: the actual fulfillment of mitzvot. It is not enough to have one sign alone. The camel represents animals with internal signs while the "chazir" (pig) symbolizes those who only possess the external signs.

Yitzchak attempts to understand what is delaying the Final Redemption and concludes: "Behold the camels are coming". At the time of Ikvatei D'Mishicha, the Jewish people are like camels possessing heartfelt belief, prayer and deveikut but lack the external sign - the return to Eretz Yisrael. They indeed cry and mourn over the Destruction of the Temples and pray for the Return to Zion but are not prepared to arise and "return home".

Says the "Gelilei Zahav", it is preferable at the time of "Ikvete D'Meshicha" that Jews exhibit the external signs and take concrete steps to return and rebuild the Land even if they lack the internal signs. This is so because as Chazal say, the chazir acquired its name since in the future the Almighty will "return the chazir to its purity". Thus the action of returning to the Land and rebuilding it, will bring the Almighty to purify us all.

Today who does not want to be a "Kosher Jew"? Therefore, in addition to the prayers for the return to Zion, we must act to return and thereby bring about the Final Redemption.

**Rabbi Zev Roness, Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh**

## [4] A Touch of Wisdom, A Touch of Wit

R' Menachem Mendel of Lubavich, the Tzemach Tzedek, was known for his ability to return husbands who had abandoned their wives to their families. If a woman came to complain to him:

"Rebbe, my husband ran away, and I don't know where he is," R' Menachem Mendel would say to her: "Go to this-and-this town, and you will find your husband living there."

She would then go to that town, and find her husband living there.

Everyone considered the Rebbe to me a miracle worker, and one who was able to foretell the future.

His son, R' Leib of Kopust, once asked R' Menachem Mendel: "Father, do you really have the gift of prophecy?"

"Not in the least," answered R' Menachem Mendel. It's really very simple. Why does a husband abandon his wife? Normally because the two cannot get along together. When the husband cannot take any more, he decides to go to a place where no one knows him. Before he leaves, though, he comes to consult with me as to where to go. I then advise him to go a specific town. Later, when the wife comes to ask me where her husband is, I tell her exactly what I know."

*Shmuel Himmelstein has written a wonderful series for ArtScroll: Words of Wisdom, Words of Wit; A Touch of Wisdom, A Touch of Wit; and "Wisdom and Wit" — available at your local Jewish bookstore (or should be). Excerpted with the permission of the copyright holder*

## [5] Parsha Points to Ponder - CHAYEI SARA

1) Rabbeinu Yonah (Avot 5:3) lists Avraham's struggle to purchase a place of burial for Sara as the tenth of Avraham's tests. How could something so relatively minor be counted among the great trials of Avraham's lifetime?

2) The Torah, prior to Avraham sending Eliezer to finding a wife for Yitzchak, describes that Eliezer RULED OVER ALL OF HIS (Avraham's) POSSESSIONS. (24:2) Why is this seemingly unrelated fact important for us to know prior to this mission?

3) Why did Avraham insist that the wife for Yitzchak come from his own family and not from the people of Canaan (24:3) considering the fact that both groups were pagan?

## THESE ARE THE ANSWERS

Ponder the questions first, then read here

1) Rav Dessler answers by pointing to the situation Avraham was in and how most people react in that scenario. He was on the heels of almost killing his son and then Sarah actually died. He is trying to purchase a burial plot in a land which is promised to him and the seller is being difficult. Avraham had every excuse to lose control of himself. But, he didn't. He treated Efron with respect throughout their negotiations and never lost control. Avraham had already achieved greatness by passing tests that were between man and G-D. Now, in this tenth test, he overcame the ultimate challenge between man and his fellow man.

2) The Kli Yakar explains these words to mean that Eliezer

ruled over Avraham's possessions and they did not rule over him. Nothing in the physical world could hold sway over Eliezer's intelligence and decision making ability. This was the reason why Avraham chose Eliezer for this mission and, thus, it functions as important background to the story.

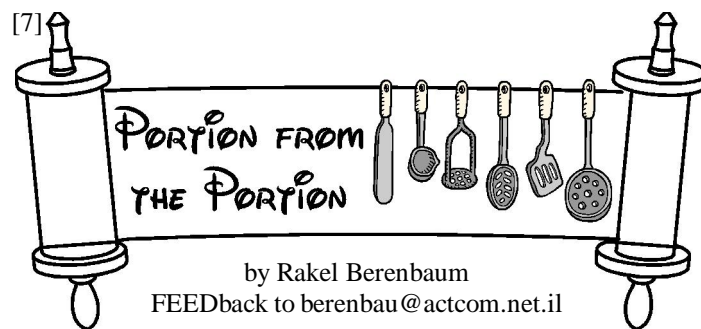
3) The Drashot HaRan answers that while the people in Avraham's family worshiped idols, they had good character traits. The people of Canaan, on the other hand, were not only pagan but they were selfish and unkind. Thus, Avraham insisted that his daughter-in-law be from his family. Some- one who is religiously off the path can be more easily salvaged than one who is unrefined in areas of character.

*Parsha Points to Ponder is prepared by Rabbi Dov Lipman Mashgiach Ruchani, Yeshivat Yesodei HaTorah in Bet Shemesh, author of "DISCOVER: Answers for Teenagers (and adults) to Questions about the Jewish Faith", soon to be republished by Feldheim - ppp@israelcenter.co.il*

## [6] MicroUlpan

In English, it's a FERN... flowerless, seedless vascular plants having roots, stems, and fronds and reproducing by spores.

Scientific name: PTERIDOPHYTA. In Hebrew - SHARACH



Everyone knows how much thought, heartache and si'ata d'shmaya (help from Heaven) goes into finding the right shiduch for our children. We learn this in this week's parsha from Avraham Avinu who wanted to find the proper match for his son. Avraham didn't want Yitzchak to marry any of the Canaanite girls living around them. He hoped Yitzchak would marry a girl from his birthplace, Aram Naharayim. But Avraham was too old (24:1) ZAKEN BA BAYAMIM to go back to his homeland to find a wife for his son, and Isaac was a "pure offering" OLEH TEMIMA and couldn't leave Eretz Yisrael. So Avraham appointed his devoted servant Eliezer with this task. Eliezer was instructed that no matter what happened, he was not to take Yitzchak back to Avraham's native land.

In order to help Eliezer with his mission, Avraham sent him with the best things that he owned KOL TUV ADONAV B'YADO (24:10).

After seeing how Rivka gave him water to drink and gave water to all 10 of his camels, Eliezer took out a (nose) ring weighing half a shekel and two gold bracelets weighing ten gold shekels for Rivka. These were a token of thanks for the hard work she had done and also a way to convince her to come join Avraham's family. These objects did have an effect and Laban, Rivka's brother, after seeing the expensive gifts Rivka received, ran to greet Eliezer and invited him to their house. Lavan and Betuel agreed to the marriage idea and Eliezer took out more gifts (24:53). He gave MIGDANOT to Rivka's brother and

mother. Migdanot are either PRI MEGADIM, delicious fruits of Eretz Yisrael according to Rashi, or nuts KLIYOT V'EGOZIM according to the Midrash Lekach Tov. He gave Rivka expensive clothes as well as gold and silver jewelry thereby acting as a shaliach to do the ERUSIN (betrothal) ceremony with Rivka for Yitzchak. He had brought along a minyan of his own, 10 men, ANASHIM (one for each camel), for the brachot of the ERUSIN (Oznayim LaTora). Only then did he and his men sit down to eat (at the ERUSIN meal, a SEUDAT MITZVA) having refused (24;33) until then the food that Lavan served.

There are a lot of gifts mentioned here in detail. Rashi sees a hint in these gifts:

Ring weighing half a shekel - the half a shekel given in the Mishkan and Temple and two gold bracelets - the two Luchot, weighing ten gold shekels - the ten commandments. These all hint to the fact that by marrying Yitzchak, Rivka became part of the Torah and the Jewish people.

In some Jewish communities this Torah portion is read as Maftir for a Shabbat Chatan.

## Golden Onion (Nose) Rings

3 egg whites  
1 Tbs. olive oil  
1 cup bread crumbs  
2 large sweet onions

Preheat oven to 450°F (230°C)

Beat egg whites with oil

Slice onion rings 1 cm. thick

Dip onion in egg mixture, drain, then dip in bread crumbs

Arrange in single layer on baking sheet

Bake 15-20 minutes till golden brown.

Serve with nuts and special fruits from Eretz Yisrael (migdanot)

## [8] Divrei Menachem

The name of our parsha, Chayei Sara, means the "Life of Sara." Yet the parsha deals not with Sara's life but with her death and the aftermath: Avraham's purchase of the Cave of Machpela for her burial, the marriage of Yitzchak to Rivka, and reference to the progeny of Avraham. So why is the parsha named for Sara's life?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that a Jewish person is indeed measured by the deeds attained during his lifetime, but more so by the legacy that he leaves behind. The true measure of a person's virtue, the Rebbe notes, is reflected in the acts of his children.

Most significant here is what distinguished Sara from Avraham. Avraham as the "Father of many nations" begets children from Sara and Hagar and is concerned to bless them all. In contrast, Sara's only concern is that her son Yitzchak be the sole heir to the Jewish heritage. Ultimately, Sara is vindicated, as indicated in the Torah: "And Avraham gave all that he had to Yitzchak" (Breishit 25:5).

And Sara's legacy continued, as recorded with respect to Rivka. For when Rivka enters Yitzchak's tent, Yitzchak is now,

"consoled after his mother". The Malbim explains that Rivka possessed Sara's qualities and in that merit the blessings that typified Sara's home returned to her son's abode (cf. Rashi on 24:7). Let us pray that the spirit of Sara similarly pervades our lives and our homes.

**Shabbat Shalom, Menachem Persoff**

## Towards better Davening and Torah Learning Concerning HEI

This review was prompted by the opening word in this week's sedra - VAV-YUD-HEI-YUD-VAV, pronounced as follows: first syllable VAI (rhymes with by), second syllable YIHVV, with an aspirated HEI, meaning it is sounded. The SH'VA under the HEI is NACH, meaning it doesn't have a vowel sound, only a consonant sound that closes the preceding syllable, and the third syllable is YU (as in you). The first YUD has a DAGESH CHAZAK, so its sound stretches from the end of the first syllable to the beginning of the second syllable. In other words, not VA YIH YU, but VAI YIH YU with the VAI and YIH syllables fused.

There are 1244 HEI/SH'VAs in Tanach - the SH'VA is always NACH. When reading these words, resist the natural tendency to give the HEI a short vowel sound and connect it to the coming syllable. It closes the previous syllable. SHEHAKOL NIH YA (or NIH YE) BID-VARO. The next to the last word of the bracha has only two syllables NIH and YA (or YE). Many (most?) people have a HI (as in hit) middle syllable which isn't there.

## SHEYIBANEH BEIT HAMIKDASH...

*A series of articles on Beit HaMikdash-related topics by Catriel Sugarman intended to increase the knowledge, interest, and anticipation of the reader, thereby hastening the realization of our hopes and prayers for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Beit HaMikdash.*

## "The Large Drill that Lay in a Mikdash Chamber"

If on Erev Shabbat, a Yisrael recites Kiddush over less wine than the amount ordained by the Sages, the Kiddush is invalid. Similarly, a Yisrael who eats less than a KaZayit of Matza (the minimal amount instituted by the Sages) on the eve of the 15th of Nisan (Seder night) "has not fulfilled his obligation". Faithful to their role as teachers of Torah to Am Yisrael, it was only natural for the Sages to be very careful in ascertaining the minimal quantity, amount, size, etc. of a specific substance, item, or material necessary to fulfill a particular Mitzva. Throughout classical rabbinic literature, the Sages constantly discuss the minimal amount of wine necessary for Kiddush, the minimal size of an Etrog or Sukka, the minimal quantity of "Halachically unacceptable" water that will invalidate an "incomplete" Mikveh, etc. In Masechet Keilim 17:12 there is a list of minimal amounts and sizes cited by the Tana'im as crucial in determining the Halachic validity of certain acts. The Mishna cites one example. "If someone eats on Yom Kippur the quantity of a large date's bulk (this) refers to the size of itself (the date) together with its stone" (then he is culpable. Yoma 8:2). Another example cited in this Mishna is what the minimal size must be in order for an artificially bored light hole to be

capable of "admitting" ritual impurity into a pure area and thereby contaminating it. The specified size given is Shi'uro Kl'melo Makdei'ach Gadol Shel Lishka; i.e. the diameter of a hole bored by "the large drill that lay in a chamber in the Mikdash..." The Mishna in Oholot 2:3 records a dispute between R. Meir and the Sages. "...of what drill did they speak? R. Meir said the small one used by physicians. The Sages said, "The large one in the Mikdash chamber." Tiferet Yisrael explains (36), "They used this particular drill in the Azara and it was stored in a special chamber..." In Oholot 13:1, there is yet another reference to this drill. The Mishna reads, "(With regard to) a newly bored light hole, the minimum size (for permitting the entry of impurity) is that of a hole made by the large drill that lay in a chamber of the Mikdash." Tiferet Yisrael comments (Yachin 2) that the diameter of the hole drilled by the "large Mikdash drill" is one third of a Tefach or roughly 3.11cm. It is fascinating that these three Mishnayot utilize the diameter of a hole bored by a "Mikdash drill" hidden away "in the Azara" as a well-known standard of measure that people could picture.

Depicted in ancient engineering books, the "Mikdash drill" cited in the Mishnayot was very likely a "bow drill", a common portable hand tool widely used throughout the ancient world. Properly used, a workman using a "bow drill" could bore holes in rock as well as in wood. The workman prepared a wooden bow connected at the ends by a loose cord and positioned a wooden "hourglass shaped" shaft at the midpoint of the bow and wrapped the cord around it. "When he moved the bow sideways, he rotated the shaft which had an iron point (or drill bit) fitted to its lower end. A shaped stone socket held the upper end. The workman spun the bow drill by holding the bow with one hand and the stone guide socket with the other hand." The workers kept the stone socket very well lubricated with grease to prevent the friction from unduly heating up the drill handle when he pressed down. Similarly while drilling, the workmen introduced grease into the deepening hole for the same reason. Even so, since the artisans of those days did not use tungsten steel for their drill bits, the "wear and tear" was very high. Utilizing brick ovens, anvils made of iron, hammers, leather bellows, and sheer muscle power, blacksmiths were constantly manufacturing new drill bits and re-sharpening the old ones. While the large Mikdash drill could bore a hole with the diameter of a third of a Tefach (3.11cm), artisans on other sites used much larger drills; some bow drills could bore 10cm. diameter holes. The Mikdash work crews had a very sophisticated range of hand tools at their disposal aside from an assortment of drills. Hanging on the wall in the "Mikdash repair shop" were adjustable triangles, rulers, squares, calipers, saws, chisels, hammers and mallets of various sizes. Many of the hand tools were fabricated from hard dolomite stone, which permitted their use in areas in the Mikdash where the use of iron was forbidden (e.g. the Mizbei'ach).

Even though the list of Mikdash officials cited in Shekalim 5:1 does not include an "Av Bayit" responsible for maintenance, no doubt a high ranking Kohein reporting directly to the Segan Kohein Gadol (the deputy High Priest, the man directly responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the Mikdash) fulfilled this role. It is likely that his staff included Levites as well as Kohanim. The Kohanim worked in the restricted area where non-Kohanim were barred and there was no shortage of Kohanim trained in stonemasonry and carpentry. Josephus informs us that when Herod refurbished the Beit HaMikdash, he taught a thousand Kohanim these skills (Antiquities b.15:11; 2). However, if necessary, the Mikdash authorities were prepared to

be flexible. "When we need to build (or do repairs) in the Heichal, we endeavor to insure that the workman be a "Kohein Kasheir", but if this is not possible, and no one except a Yisrael can be found, he can enter (and do the necessary work). In the language of the Tosefta to Keilim, 'Anyone can enter (the restricted areas) to build, to repair and to remove impurity. It is a Mitzva for the Kohanim to do it, but if there are no available Kohanim, Leviyim may enter. If there are no available Leviyim, Yisraelim may enter. It is a Mitzva (for the work to be undertaken by workers) in a state of purity. If there is no one available in a state of purity, (a workman) in a state of impurity may enter. It is a Mitzva for someone in perfect physical condition to enter, but if no one in perfect physical condition is available, someone who has a physical defect may enter. It is a Mitzva (if the workers) enter in boxes (so they "do not feast their eyes). The boxes enclosed the workman on three sides so he saw only what was necessary for his work) but if boxes are unavailable, they may enter through the doors." (Midot 4:5, Rambam).

### The Sages Did Not Use Tambour Color Charts!

In the Mishna, we read, "...they used to whiten the Heichal (i.e. the Bayit) once (each year before) Pesach..."Midot 3:4). Josephus writes, "But this Temple appeared to strangers, when they were coming to it at a distance, like a mountain covered with snow; for those parts of it which were not covered with gold were exceedingly white." While the Bayit may have appeared white as snow in the brilliant Jerusalem sunshine, the actual color was slightly darker. The Mishna in Nega'im 1:1 reads, "The colors of (Tzara'at, "leprosy") signs are two which, in fact, are four... Baheret is bright white like snow; secondary to it is the (Tzora'at) sign as white as the whitewash used (to whiten) the Heichal..." While the Tana'im did not have at their disposal Tambour color charts, they were able to utilize the color of the Mikdash as a standard of comparison when it was necessary to define accurately the parameters of a Halacha!

*Catriel's book in progress: The Temple of Jerusalem, A Pilgrim's Perspective; A Guided Tour through the Temple and the Divine Service*

## from page 3 PARSHA PIX

400 silver pieces that Avraham handed over to EFRON (pencil = IPARON, spelled the same as EFRON).

Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to cry. V'LIVKOTAH is written with a small KAF. There it is, under the pencil - a small kaf, a.k.a. a demitasse spoon.

G-d blessed Avraham BAKOL. There is an opinion that this blessing included a precious gem that had miraculous curative powers. That's it under the B"H.

There's a speech-bubble with a chain in it, standing for VAYOMAR, and he (Eliezer) said, which is read with a SHALSHELET (chain). BARUCH HASHEM was said by Eliezer.

Dakva's scene of Rivka at the well (spring) watering Eliezer's camels.

There is one of the gold rings Eliezer gave to Rivka.

The Xed out turkey platter is Eliezer's refusal to eat before he had completed "business".

Good thing, too, because Lavan had poisoned the food (poison symbol).

CHUPA is for Yitzchak's marriage to Rivka (also Avraham's to Keturah).

Gift for Rivka and her family, as well as the gifts Avraham gave to the children of the "PILAGSHIM".

The word TEREM appears eight times in the Torah, twice in Chayei Sara. That's the Terem logo on the right side of the Pix.

The bottle of NEVIOT water is for the sound-alike of the first born of Yishma'el.

There are two dots forming a SH'VA - this is a sound-alike for a grandson of Avraham's via Keturah.

The animals are mentioned in the haftara.

So is the question as to who will sit on David's throne after his death.

That leaves the Zodiac TTriddle

and two unexplained elements, which are visual TTriddles.

The one in the lower-left of the PP is a special TTriddle - first correct answer wins a T-shirt from Not Just T's, Rechov HaHistadrut, off Ben Yehuda. Whether or not you get this TTriddle, it's K'DAI to check out Not Just T's. Tell them Torah Tidbits sent you.

## TTRIDDLES...

are Torah Tidbits-style riddles on Parshat HaShavua (sometimes on the calendar). They are found in the hard-copy of TT scattered throughout, usually at the bottom of different columns. In the electronic versions of TT, they are found all together at the end of the ParshaPix-TTriddles section. The best solution set submitted each week (there isn't always a best) wins a double prize a CD from Noam Productions and/or a gift (game, puzzle, book, etc.) from Big Deal

### Last issue's (VAYEIRA) TTriddles:

[1] If Utz is Oz then who might have been the wizard?

[2] Former first lady, originally a second one

[3] Just beginning to say too much, sirs, for me found the city

[4] Avraham and Yaakov too, but Yehuda was the headliner

[5] Avraham, Yishmael, Yosef, Par'o, Moshe, David, Sha'ul, Shim'i, and a what?

[6] The peace is questioned more than twice as often as it is definite

[7] Leah four times referring to Yaakov, the oil lady and the Tekoan

[8] plus one element from the ParshaPix

### And the envelope, please...

[1] The book of Iyov begins: There was a man in the land of Utz, Iyov was his name. Daat Z'keinim miBaalei HaTos'fot says that the Midrash says that Utz was Iyov. Either way, he'd be a likely candidate for the Wizard of Utz. Utz is what Oz is called in the Hebrew translations of the Wizard of Oz.

[2] One of Israel's former first ladies is Reuma Weizmann, wife of the late Ezer Weizmann. The original Reuma was the pilegish (second lady) of Nachor, brother of Avraham. His "main" wife was Milka. Nachor and Milka were the grandparents of Rivka Imeinu.

[3] HINEI NA, a phrase that jumped out as a possible TTriddle, returned 26 results from a search of Tanach. Too many for a TTriddle. But only 9 occurrences in the Chumash. All 9 are in B'reshit, and 6 of those are in Vayeira. That's good TTriddle potential. The words of the TTriddle are the ones that follow the HINEI NAsin Vayeira. HO'IL L'DABEIR (twice in Avraham's plea to save Sedom), ADONAI, my sirs (Lot to the angels), LI, for me (Lot again, about his two unmarried daughters), MATZA AVD'CHA CHEIN, your servant finds favor in your eyes (Lot to the angels), HA'IR, the city (the following pasuk, Lot still asking the angels for a favor). Interesting that the two earlier HINEI NAs were said by Avra(ha)m and Sara(i) in Lech L'cha. That's 8 of the 9 HINEI NAs coming from Avraham, Sara, and Lot. The 9th one in Chumash was said by Yitzchak. It's like the HINEI NAs in the Torah are tightly clustered.

[4] The first person to "approach", as in VAYIGASH, was Avraham, who approached G-d, so to speak, to plea for Sedom. The next for VAYIGASHes are Yaakov. But the following VAYIGASH is the headliner - i.e. the name of a sedra, as in VAYIGASH EILAV YEHUDA...

[5] Again, here is how a certain type of TTriddle comes about. VAIMAHEIR, and he hurried. Not a common word. Twice in Vayeira. Good start. Only 9 times in Tanach. Okay - who hurried in Tanach? Avraham and Yishmael in Vayeira. Yosef, Par'o, and Moshe. That's it for the Chumash. David, Shaul, and Shim'i in Shmuel Alef and Bet. And the ninth? A prophet who disguised himself (Melachim Alef 20:41). On the female side, by the way, VAT'MAHEIR, we find Rivka hurrying three times, Mano'ach's wife (Shimshon's mother), Avigayil twice, and "the woman" with Sha'ul in Shmuel Alef 28.

[6] This refers to the word HASHALOM. It appears 18 times in Tanach, including 3 times in one pasuk from the haftara of Vayeira (which is why it became a TTriddle for last week's issue). In this context, the HEI is the questioning HEI, voweled with a CHATAF-PATACH, rather than the HEI HAYEDI'A, the "THE" HEI, that has a PATACH and puts a DAGESH CHAZAK in the SHIN. Only 6 of 20 HASHALOMs in Tanach are the definitive kind. The other 14 have the questioning HEI.

[7] LEAH referred to YAAKOV as ISHI, my husband (4 times). The word only appears in Tanach 8 times, including once in Vayeira's haftara. That was the widowed woman who appealed to the prophet Elisha for help. The other is the woman from Teko'a that Yoav set up to go to the king and pose as a widow with a sob story... (Shmuel Bet 14).

[8] This really isn't a TTriddle - it's a straightforward matter of reading Braille. It started several years ago in a ParshaPixPuzzle. The people of Sedom gathered at Lot's house in angry protest of the fact that he had welcomed guest into his home and was protecting them. The angels afflicted the people with blindness. This prompted on of them (in the warped world of TTriddles) to write on Lot's door (in Braille, of course) an expression of his anger at Lot. This Braille graffiti has changed each year. This time it is the Sedom insult - GUEST LOVER.

MM/Bklyn submitted a near-perfect solution set. He has been given another chance on the one he did not get, since his answer would fit the TTriddle reasonably well. (The first lady one.) TTriddles honors to YYW, multiple Sherers