



BS"D

To: parsha@parsha.net  
From: cshulman@gmail.com

## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON CHAYEI SARAH - 5772

In our 17th year! To receive this parsha sheet, go to <http://www.parsha.net> and click Subscribe or send a blank e-mail to [subscribe@parsha.net](mailto:subscribe@parsha.net). Please also copy me at [cshulman@gmail.com](mailto:cshulman@gmail.com). A complete archive of previous issues is now available at <http://www.parsha.net>. It is also fully searchable.

---

This week's Internet Parsha Sheet is sponsored by **Steve & Ruthie Sommer in memory of his father Natan ben Yehuda** (Kurt Sommer) whose Yahrzeit is 23 of Cheshvan - November 20

---

This week's Internet Parsha Sheet is sponsored anonymously for a Refuah Shleimah for **Yitzchak Yaakov ben Basia Sarah Chaim Yissachor Ben Chaye Mushkit Henna Sara bat Fayga Malya** b'soch sha'ar cholei yisroel

---

To sponsor a parsha sheet (proceeds to tzedaka) contact [cshulman@parsha.net](mailto:cshulman@parsha.net)

---

<http://www.chief Rabbi.org/ReadArtical.aspx?id=1689>  
Covenant & Conversation » 5771  
Chaye Sarah 5771

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 favorably: 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. [Rashi to Gen. 6: 9] 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 (Gen 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 Gen. 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." (Gen. 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 favor in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen. 6: 6). Twice Noah is described as a righteous man, a tzaddik: Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. (6:9) The Lord then said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation." (Gen. 7: 1) No one else in the whole of Tenakh is called righteous. [1] 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. (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" (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 paralyzed 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 parasha. He has 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 life. It is hard to imagine his state of mind as the trial unfolded. Then, just as he was about to lift the knife, came the call from heaven saying, Stop. 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 we read of the death of Sarah. The sages said 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. (Rashi to Gen. 23: 2) Try now to put yourself in the position 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, and 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 Kiriat-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 . . . (Gen. 23: 2-3) Abraham mourns and weeps, and then rises up and does two things that secure the Jewish future, two acts whose effects we feel to this day. He buys the first plot – the field and cave of Machpelah – in what will one day become the land of Israel.

And he secures a wife for his son Isaac so that there will be Jewish continuity. Noah grieves and is overwhelmed by loss. Abraham grieves, knowing what he has lost, but then 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 ability on his descendants. The Jewish people suffered tragedies that would have devastated other nations beyond 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 seventeenth and nineteenth centuries; 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 him in this week's parasha. Kierkegaard wrote a profound sentence in his Journals: "It requires moral courage to grieve; it requires religious courage to rejoice." [2] Perhaps that is the difference between Noah the righteous, and Abraham the man of faith. Noah grieved. 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. [1] Kierkegaard, *The Soul of Kierkegaard: Selections from His Journal*, (edited Alexander Dru), Dover Publications, 67.

[1] Amos uses the phrase, "they sold the righteous for silver" (Amos 2: 6), which the sages understand as a reference to Joseph, but the text itself does not say so explicitly.

---

From Rabbi Menachem Leibtag tsc@bezeqint.net  
 To Pareg <par-reg@mail.tanach.org>  
 Subject [Par-reg]  
 THE TANACH STUDY CENTER [http://www.tanach.org]  
 In Memory of Rabbi Abraham Leibtag Shiurim in Chumash & Navi by Menachem Leibtag  
 PARSHAT CHAYEI SARAH A WIFE FROM  
 TOLDOT TERACH'

"YICHUS" [family lineage] has always been an important consideration when selecting one's spouse. Nevertheless, Avraham's insistence that his 'chosen' son marry specifically a descendant of his brother NACHOR requires explanation. In this week's shiur, we return to our discussion of the "toldot" in Sefer Breishit in order to answer this question.

**INTRODUCTION** As you surely must have noticed, the phrase "Eileh TOLDOT..." appears numerous times in Sefer Breishit. In our shiur on Parshat Noach, we explained how these "toldot" [genealogies] form the 'backbone' of Sefer Breishit. In that shiur, we also explained how Sefer Breishit divided into two distinct sections. The first eleven chapters included three units that began with "toldot", each unit containing a primary story relating to God's dissatisfaction with mankind's behavior: Adam's sin in Gan Eden (and Cain's sin) / chapters 2->4, The corruption of Dor Ha-MABUL / the Flood -chps. 5->9 The story of Migdal Bavel & their dispersion / chps 10->11. After that incident - the Torah begins the 'second (and primary) section of Sefer Breishit - introduced by "toldot Shem" (see 11:10). From this point and onward, the focus of the Sefer shifts to God's choice of Avraham Avinu to become the forefather of His model nation [what we refer to as the "bechira" process]. Each unit of this section is introduced by "toladot" as well, be it "toldot Yishmael" or "toldot Yitzchak" etc, concluding with the story of Yosef and his brothers - introduced by "eileh toldot Yaakov" (see 37:2). Sefer Breishit ends, as of ALL Yaakov's offspring are chosen to become Am Yisrael - God's special nation. Our introduction as noted the rather obvious 'linear'

progression of "toladot" in Sefer Breishit. We begin our shiur, by noting the existence a 'parallel' progression as well, which will highlight the significance of the pasuk that introduces "toldot Terach". Afterward, we will show how the nation of Israel stems not only from Avraham Avinu, but from Terach as well. [And we'll try to explain why.]

**CHARTING THE TOLDOT** The following chart illustrates the progression of these "toldot" in Sefer Breishit. The chart lists the names that follow the phrase "eileh toldot..." and highlights the parallel in their progression in each of the two sections described above. [The '\*' star symbol represents the phrase "eileh toldot".] Study this chart carefully.

<b>SEFER BREISHIT - UNITS OF "EILEH TOLDOT..."</b>	
<b>CHAPTERS 1-&gt;11</b>	<b>CHAPTERS 11-&gt;50</b>
* ADAM (see 5:1)	* SHEM (see 11:10)
ten generations to:	ten generations to:
* NOACH (6:9)	* TERACH (11:27)
3 sons:	3 sons:
Shem, Cham, & Yefet	AVRAHAM, Haran, & Nachor
	*YISHMAEL (25:12-rejected)
* BNEI NOACH (10:1)	* YITZCHAK (26:1)
	* ESAV (36:1 - rejected)
	* YAAKOV (37:1-2)
70 nations (10:1-32)	70 nefesh" become God's Nation

As you study this chart, note how the chart divides according to the two sections described above. Note also how the "bechira" process includes a "dechiya" [rejection] stage together with each "bechira" stage. Finally, note how each section concludes with seventy! [Additional parallels will be noted as we continue.]

**'TEN GENERATIONS' - TWICE!**

As the chart shows, each 'section' begins with a detailed listing of 'ten generations'

Section One: - 5:1-32 / from Adam to Noach)  
 Section Two - 11:10-26 / from Shem to Terach

[Technically speaking one may be 9 generations, but it's the overall pattern that is very similar.]

This opening 'structural' parallel supports the thematic parallel between these two sections, which we discussed in our shiur on Parshat Breishit. In that shiur, we explained how the second section of Sefer Breishit begins with "toldot SHEM", and hence the story of Avraham's "bechira". As God's choice of his offspring was for the purpose of lead mankind in the direction of God - it was significant that this section began with the "SHEM", whose name reflects man's purpose - to call out "be-SHEM HASHEM". Strikingly, this structural parallel extends beyond the similarity of these two 'ten-generation' units. Note from the above chart how the middle and conclusion of each list bear a remarkable resemblance as well: Most obvious is how we find the number 70 at the conclusion of each unit. But more intriguing is the parallel that emerges in the middle! Note how:

Note how:

\*Toldot ADAM concludes with NOACH,  
 after which we find TOLDOT NOACH,  
 & the story of his 3 sons SHEM, CHAM, & YEFET.  
 (See 5:28-32; 6:9)

\* TOLDOT SHEM concludes with TERACH,  
 after which we find TOLDOT TERACH,  
 & the story of his 3 sons AVRAM, NACHOR, & HARAN.  
 (See 11:24-26; 11:27)

Furthermore, the three sons of Noach, like the three sons of Terach receive either a special blessing or curse: \* Avraham, like Shem, is blessed with the privilege of representing God. \* Haran's son Lot, like Cham's son Canaan, is involved in a sin relating to incest. \* Nachor's offspring Rivka, Rachel & Leah return to 'dwell within the tent' of the children of Avraham, just as Yefet is destined to dwell within the 'tent of SHEM'. [See 9:24-27 /"yaft Elokim l'Yefet ve-yishkon be-ohalei Shem".]

Even though the meaning of these parallels requires further elaboration, for our purposes here the parallel itself calls our attention to the significance of "toldot Terach".

TOLDAT TERACH vs. TOLDAT AVRAHAM In fact, the phrase "toldot Terach" appears right where we may have expected to find a unit beginning with "toldot Avraham"! To our surprise, even though we later find units that begin with "toldot Yitzchak" and "toldot Yaakov" [and even "toldot Yishmael" & "toldot Esav"], we never find a unit that begins with "toldot Avraham! Instead, at the precise spot where we would expect to find a unit beginning with "toldot Avraham", we find a unit that begins with "toldot Terach". This alone already hints to the fact that there must be something special about Terach.

This observation also explains why Sefer Breishit dedicates so much detail to the story of Lot. Since the phrase "toldot Terach" forms the header for parshiot Lech Lecha, Vayera and Chayei Sarah, this unit must include not only the story of Avraham, but the story of the children of Nachor and Haran (Lot), as well. Thus, in addition to the life story of Avraham himself, these "parshiot" also discuss:

- \* Lot's decision to leave Avraham Avinu, preferring the 'good life' in Sdom (13:1-18)
- \* Avraham's rescue of Lot from the four kings (14:1-24)
- \* God's sparing of Lot from destruction of Sdom (19:1-24)
- \* The birth of Lot's two sons - Ammon & Moav (19:30-38)
- \* The 12 children of Nachor (22:20-24)

[8 sons from his wife and 4 from his pilegish

(Sounds familiar?)]

- \* Avraham's marrying off his son to Nachor's granddaughter Hence, Parshat Chayei Sarah forms a most appropriate conclusion for this unit that began with "toldot Terach". Avraham makes a point of selecting a daughter-in-law specifically from the family of his brother, Nachor, thus bringing the history of "toldot Terach" full circle. As we will show in our shiur, all of Terach's offspring may have potential for "bechira". Therefore, if Yitzchak is to be married, his wife should be chosen from the family in which this potential lies.

Herein may also lie the reason why Nachor and Avraham themselves married 'within the family' - the daughters of Haran (see 11:29 and Rashi's identification of Yiskah as Sarah).

WHY TERACH? What was so special about Terach that he 'deserves' his own "toldot"? It is really hard to know since the Torah tells us so little about him. On the one hand, Sefer Yehoshua introduces Nachor as almost a paradigm for the life of an idolater (see Yehoshua 24:2). Yet, as the end of Parshat Noach teaches us, Terach was the first person to recognize the spiritual importance of Eretz Canaan. He set out to 'make aliya' even BEFORE God had commanded Avraham to do so (see 11:31 & Seforno's explanation).

Even though this may sound a bit too 'zionistic', considering that this is the ONLY detail we find in the Torah concerning Terach - one could suggest that Terach's merit lay simply in his having been the first person to move his family towards Eretz Canaan. [In the

'spirit' of "ma'aseh avot siman la-banim" - Terach could actually be considered the first 'Zionist' (in a modern day sense). Like any good Zionist, Terach plans to 'make aliya' and even encourages his family to do so, but he himself never makes it there.]

We may suggest, however, a more thematically significant approach. Terach and his offspring may represent a certain aspect of the "bechira" process - wherein there lies a potential to be chosen - but only if worthy. Terach's initiative in this regard may have granted the possibility of becoming part of 'chosen family' to any of his offspring who prove themselves deserving of this distinction.

Avraham Avinu not only follows his father's lead and continues to Eretz Canaan, but also follows faithfully God's command throughout. He then becomes the progenitor of God's special nation. Nachor, however, stays behind. Lot (Haran's son) had the opportunity to remain with Avraham, but detaches himself by choosing the 'good life' in Kikar Ha-yarden (see shiur on Parshat Lech Lecha). However, Nachor's granddaughter, Rivka, and great-granddaughters, Rachel & Leah, prove themselves worthy of joining the distinctive nation, and work their way back into the family of Avraham. In fact, this may explain the reason for the Torah's minute detail of Rivka's hospitality - in the story of how she was chosen to become the wife for Yitzchak.

Even though the "bechira" process at times may appear random and indiscriminate, the framework of "toldot Terach" may reflect the importance of personal commitment in earning that "bechira". Once again, a lesson from which we can remind ourselves that our nation was not chosen simply to receive divine privilege, but rather towards the destiny of an eternal responsibility.

shabbat shalom

menachem

---

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

---

From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein

<info@jewishdestiny.com>

Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

**Jerusalem Post :: Friday, November 18, 2011**

**EDITING :: Rabbi Berel Wein**

I have learned through painful experience that all books, no matter how well written the author believes them to be, require good editing. As distressing as it is to see one's immortal words erased, rearranged, corrected and clarified, every author will ruefully admit that a good editor improves the book that is being published.

Words and ideas that are clear to the author may appear vague and confusing to the uninitiated reader. And there is nothing as frustrating and self-defeating than to write and publish a book that is difficult to read, impossible to really understand and eventually, of little influence and lasting consequence.

Submitting the manuscript to another pair of well trained eyes to read and critique becomes almost a necessity. There is an old Yiddish aphorism that states that one should never show a half completed project to the uninitiated. That certainly is true regarding books. And, to a great extent, a book that has never been professionally edited and meticulously reviewed by someone other than the author is usually only a half completed project.

Many an otherwise important and meaningful work has been damaged by the lack of good editing or no editing. In the Jewish world the art of editing is a rather late phenomenon. Certainly in the

realm of halachic decision, except for the self-editing capacity of the decisor himself, no serious type of editing was ever done. Because of this, many times the intention of the author and decisor was often difficult to ascertain and understand. Thus an entire sub discipline of commentaries was necessarily created in order to understand and interpret the original decision.

When it came to the works of the great scholars of medieval times – the Rishonim - every written word of theirs was examined by the later generations of scholars – the Achronim – and commented upon. Every possible nuance of the word in all of its forms was explored and examined. And the constant question that always arose was why this particular word was chosen to be used and/or why was another, seemingly synonymous to it, discarded.

As true as this is regarding the works of many of the great Rishonim – Rashba (Rabbi Shlomo ben Aderet); Ritva (Rabbi Yom Tov ibn Ashbili); Ramban (Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman); and even truer regarding the works of Rambam (Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon.) His great halachic code, Mishne Torah, has withstood the centuries of intense scrutiny by generations of scholars over many centuries.

From the words of the son of Rambam, Rabbi Avraham ben Harambam, it appears that Rambam himself was his own editor and that he reviewed all of his writings numerous times before they were sent to his copyists for public distribution. Many times authors revised their original drafts in light of comments on their works made by copyists. Thus there were often different versions of the same work in circulation and there then arose discussion and possible confusion as to which version the author intended to be the “correct” one.

Rashi’s great commentary to the Talmud appeared in three edited versions. Rashi himself appeared to be the editor, or at least supervised the editing. Rashi’s editing of the third edition was never completed by him and thus other commentaries authored by Rashbam (Rabbi Shmuel ben Meir) Rashi’s grandson, Ran (Rabbi Nossan ben Reuven of Spain) and others were substituted in our printed form of the Talmud for those portions of the book where Rashi’s final edition was unavailable.

The process of editing and correcting the text of the Talmud and its attendant commentaries continued throughout the centuries. After the publication of the monumental Rom (Vilna) edition of the Talmud at the end of the nineteenth century, the editors of that enormous work discovered twelve thousand errors that had snuck into the printed volumes.

The list of errors was painstakingly assembled and in a new edition of the Talmud scheduled to be printed in 1915, these errors were to be corrected. However in the German bombardment of Vilna in World War 1, the Rom printing plant was destroyed and those twelve thousand errors have yet to be completely edited out of the pages of the Vilna Talmud.

This only points out the previously stated proposition that all books require good and thorough editing. Just as the written word requires editing before publication so too does the spoken word. I once had a sign on my desk that said: “Do not engage mouth unless brain is in gear.” Truer words were never spoken.

Shabat shalom

---

From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein  
 <info@jewishdestiny.com>  
 Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

**Weekly Parsha :: CHAYEI SARAH :: Rabbi Berel Wein**

Finding the right mate has always been a complicated and potentially hazardous matter. It remains so today. Just ask any parent in our current society who has marriageable age children and you will, in all probability, hear a tale of angst and frustration about the inequities of life and the illogic of it all. In this week’s parsha, Avraham faces the task of finding a wife for Yitzchak. His main concern is that the prospective bride be from his extended family and not from the Canaanite women.

Jewish tradition has always viewed the family as being an important component in choosing a proper mate. Though family certainly cannot be the only criterion, it certainly is an important one. The rabbis taught us that the speech and language of a child is always a reflection of the speech and language of the father and mother of that child. People who are raised in serene and loving home environments, homes of tradition and Jewish values usually grow up to be serene, self-confident and proud Jews.

Children who are raised in dysfunctional family environments have great hurdles to overcome to achieve self-worth and a productive life. Both the Canaanites and Avraham’s family in Aram were pagans. But Avraham’s family had the stability and a minimum code of morality, traits that were lacking in the more permissive and licentious Canaanite society. This was the curse of the Canaanite society and Avraham felt that this factor would be impossible to ever truly overcome.

Eliezer, the loyal servant of Avraham, adds another requirement to the search for the mate of Yitzchak. Innate kindness and goodness and the willingness to sacrifice one’s own comforts for the sake of others is part of the makeup of Yitzchak. He was raised in a house where concern for the welfare of others was the everyday norm. A husband and wife have to be on the same page when it comes to this issue.

I recall that in my years as a rabbi there were husbands and wives that would bring to me money to distribute to the needy of the community and caution me not to allow their respective spouse to become aware that they had done so. Sometimes there were halachic or overriding family issues present that even forced me not to accept the donation. But I was always saddened by such situations.

Eliezer’s testing of Rivkah was correctly done in order to spare the couple possibly ruinous disputes in their future life together. And since in the house of Avraham and Sarah kindness of spirit and generosity of action and behavior were the fundamental norms of their family life, only a spouse that also espoused those ideals could bring to Yitzchak happiness and serenity.

The Canaanite society that tolerated and even exalted the societies of Sodom and Amorah could not produce a suitable mate for Yitzchak. The Torah tells us that Yitzchak loved Rivkah. Love is based on character traits and shared values and not only on physical beauty and attraction. That is what makes its achievement so elusive for so many.

Shabat shalom

---

From Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>  
 To weekly@ohr.edu  
 Subject Torah Weekly

**TORAH WEEKLY :: Parshat Chayei Sara**  
**For the week ending 19 November 2011 / 21 Heshvan 5772**  
**from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu**  
**by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonofthemoon.com**  
**INSIGHTS**

Wasted On The Young  
 “...the years of the life of Sarah.” (23:1)

Those of us who are old enough to have trouble recalling large areas of their youth will at least have no trouble remembering some standout moments of total irresponsibility. Like hitching a ride with a lunatic German motorcyclist careening his BMW 900 down the autobahn at 100 miles-an-hour through torrential rain in the dead of night. Or going for a walk by yourself in New York City and suddenly realizing that you're in the middle of Harlem.

"Youth is wasted on the young" runs the old adage. As our hair thins and our waistlines thicken, we try and shed the immaturity of youth and improve our characters, and our actions.

It comes out, then, that what we really can call our 'life' — our arriving at some kind of perfection in this world — happens pretty close to our departure from this world. Viewed in this way, our 'lives' are even shorter than we thought, and even without the help of lunatic escapades and motorcycle madness.

All the above is true of the average person. However, there are those special people whose entire lives are focused and directed to their ultimate goal. Such were "the years of the life of Sarah." As Rashi says "all of them were equal in their goodness." None of them were wasted or misspent. And even though, of course, Sarah's stature grew in old age, this was the dividend of a holy life spend in doing mitzvot and good deeds, rather than the necessity to forsake the foolishness of youth — for "all of them were equal in their goodness."

Source: Based on the Sfat Emet

Written and compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

© 2011 Ohr Somayach International - All rights reserved.

---

From Shema Yisrael Torah Network

<shemalist@shemayisrael.com>

To Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com>

Subject Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

### **Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum – Parshas Chayei Soroh**

#### **And Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to bewail her. (23:2)**

In his Sefer Chareidim, Horav Elazar Azkari, zl, writes, "It is a mitzvah to eulogize an adam kasher, a proper, upright man, as it is written, 'And Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to bewail her.'" This is part of gemilas chassadim, acts of loving-kindness. While it is the correct and proper thing to do, the sequence of events in the parashah seems out of order. One would think that the first reaction to hearing the news of someone's sudden passing would be weeping. Only later, after the emotion of the day has settled, does the mourner begin with eulogy, which appears to be an intellectual appreciation of the deceased. Avraham Avinu did the opposite, first eulogizing Sarah Imeinu, and only afterwards did he cry.

Horav Zalman Sorotzkin, zl, explains this practically. People respond to death with immediate weeping, because it is the natural reaction to the loss of a loved one - regardless of the individual's stature, pedigree, achievement, etc. Later, after the grieving is subdued, one begins to formulate an appreciation of the deceased, his or her distinct individuality. Personal loss precedes public loss; thus, weeping precedes eulogy.

In Sarah's case, as well as in the case of a world leader, one whose impact on the klal, community, is profound, the sequence is different. Avraham Avinu was acutely aware that Sarah's passing was not just a personal loss. It was a world tragedy. She impacted humanity. Her passing was felt by every living soul with whom she had come in contact and by all of those others who had lost out on this singular opportunity. Avraham's tears for his personal loss had to be choked

back in order to allow for the communal expression over their collective loss.

Perhaps, we might offer another insight into the change in sequence that appears in the pasuk. Horav Elazar M. Shach, zl, wonders why the Torah repeats Sarah's name. "And Sarah died; and Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to bewail her." Clearly, he was eulogizing Sarah. After all, she was the one who had died! Rav Shach explains that, given Avraham's world position, understandably the most distinguished members of that generation came to eulogize her out of respect to Avraham - the gadol ha'dor, preeminent leader of the generation. Their words reflected Sarah's distinction because of - and in relation to - her esteemed husband. They lauded the support she gave him, her constant encouragement, her readiness always to be present for him. The eulogies were impressive, but, regrettably, they all addressed Sarah as Avraham's wife. She was secondary to him. Her own personal distinction, her myriad acts of chesed, her supremacy in nevuah, prophecy, were not addressed. This is why Avraham made a point to eulogize "Sarah," the woman, the individual, the mother, the matriarch. This is why the Torah emphasizes the name, "Sarah."

This might be why Avraham first eulogized Sarah before expressing his personal grief. He needed to set the record straight, notifying everyone that Sarah was a giant in her own right, that his spiritual level was overshadowed by hers. Then he allowed his personal grief to set in. He now could weep over his personal loss.

#### **Avraham rose up from the presence of his dead. (23:3)**

Horav Yechezkel Rabinowitz, zl, author of the Knesses Yechezkel and Admor of Radomsk, explains this pasuk homiletically. He cites the Talmudic dictum in Meseches Shabbos 153a, and Pirkei Avos 2:15, "Repent one day before you die." The Talmud poses the question of whether one knows when he will die: "Therefore, one should repent daily, since he never knows if he will be around the next day. This will generate an entire life filled with teshuvah." The Radomsker remarked that this is how a Jew should live: Today is the last day of my life. I was allowed to live today, so that I can leave this world spiritually correct, having repented any indiscretions.

This is the pasuk's message. "Avrohom rose up," every aspect of the Patriarch's life which represented a spiritual "rise," advance/progress, was predicated upon the notion that it was "from the presence of his dead." Avraham Avinu's mortality was a constant presence in his mind. He never forgot for one moment that "today" could be the last day of his life. "Tomorrow" could have him standing before the Heavenly Tribunal. The Patriarch never lost sight of man's ultimate end. I must add: He neither lived negatively, nor was he a fatalist. He was a realist. Our mortality is quite real.

The Radomsker lived his life this way. Even in his youth, he never for one moment lost sight of this verity. Every day had the specter of death looming over it. He left this world on Shabbos Parashas Chayei Sarah (1911). That Friday night, he sang Eishes Chayil, "Woman of Valor," with great intensity and fervor, repeating the phrase, Va'tischak l'yom acharon, "She joyfully awaited the last day," many times - until he left this world - with those words on his lips. He died in as much the same manner that he lived - at peace with himself, because he never lost sight of the yom acharon.

Chazal cite Shlomo HaMelech's exhortation in Koheles 8:9, "Let your garments always be white," as an allegorical message that one should always be in a state of spiritual preparedness. They present a parable of a woman who dressed up in her most impressive finery, as she was anticipating her husband's arrival from sea. When asked why she was doing it now, when, in fact, her husband was not yet due home, she replied that the ship might pick up a strong headwind, causing it to arrive in port earlier than expected. She wanted to be ready for her husband's arrival.

Our Sages enjoin us to be ever vigilant of "today" - never knowing what tomorrow will bring - or if it will, in fact, arrive. While Chazal are addressing the need to be in spiritual readiness, I think this idea may be applied to the mundane areas of life and the relationships we have. Whether it be our relationship with our spouse, our children, our parents, our associates and friends, if we were to stop momentarily and think, "What if today is the last day of my life? What if today is the last day of their lives? Is this the way I want to be remembered? Is it worth having the "last" word - when it might really be the last word?" If we would approach life with this attitude, the various issues that cause tension in our lives would be quickly ameliorated

**That you not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites. (24:3)**

Avraham Avinu was adamant: Yitzchak was not to marry a girl from his Canaanite neighbors. Eliezer, Avraham's student, must go to Aram Naharaim to find Yitzchak's bashert, Heavenly-designated spouse. These two places had one thing in common. The people worshipped pagans. Avodah zarah, idol worship, was a way of life in both places. What did Avraham gain by going elsewhere? At least, if Yitzchak's wife were to come from Canaan, Avraham would be acquainted with the family. Kli Yakar focuses on this question and presents us with an important explanation. He explains that there is another fear, something which concerned Avraham. The nature of parents is usually transmitted to their children. Some more - some less - but certain character traits are retained. If the parents had them, there is a strong likelihood that these character traits will be prevalent in their children. This is true, however, only of those traits that are physical. For instance, if the father is an individual who is a glutton, morally deviate, envious, quick to anger, such behavior will be perpetuated by his offspring. Idol worship is a cerebral issue, dependent on a person's mind, his way of thinking, his intellect. An intellectual approach to life does not necessarily carry over from parent to child.

There are three partners in the creation of man: father, mother and Hashem. The physical aspects of the person are inherited from parents. The ability to think, believe, postulate, form an opinion - all matters of the intellect - are from Hashem. Emunah, faith, in Hashem is a function of the mind. Hashem grants each of us a neshamah, soul, and the ability to contemplate, muse, rationalize - all functions of the mind. This is not passed on from parent to offspring.

This is why our Patriarch, Avraham, distanced himself from the Canaanites, who were morally corrupt and sinful. Idol worship, which was prevalent in Aram Naharaim, was sinful behavior, but it was of an intellectual nature. Just because the parents were idolaters was not an indication that the children would follow suit.

We now understand why Avraham sought a young woman whose middos, character traits, were impeccable. Intellectual deviation is the result of middos raos, negative character traits. One who does not believe does not want to believe. He is arrogant, weak and insecure, character traits that are the antithesis of trust. Avraham knew that if he would discover a girl whose middos were exemplary, she would make the perfect life's partner for Yitzchak. Her positive middos would not allow her mind to become poisoned. It all depends on what one practices. Indeed, the Minchas Chinuch (15) writes that a wicked person who performs mitzvos all day - even though he does not perform them out of a sense of conviction - will eventually be chozeir b'teshuvah, repent and return to Hashem. In contrast, one who is a tzadik, righteous person, yet becomes accustomed to middos raos, negative character traits, will regrettably discontinue his righteous practice and become a rasha, evil.

The significance of maintaining positive character traits cannot be emphasized enough. Two bachurim, potential students, presented

themselves before the Chasam Sofer in Pressburg, which at the time was the preeminent yeshivah in Hungary. This took place immediately after the Yom Tov of Succos. These two bachurim were different from one another. One possessed a brilliant mind, with an ability to grasp and analyze the material that was quite admirable. The other bachur was a fine, young man who applied himself diligently to his studies. Acumen, however, was not something with which he had been abundantly blessed. Both were fine students, each in his own, individual manner. Yet, the Chasam Sofer accepted only one - the one whose aptitude was lacking. When queried concerning his decision, the Chasam Sofer explained, "When the bachurim came to the Yeshivah, it was immediately after Succos. Some of the leaves that had served as s'chach, covering on the Succah, had fallen to the ground. I noticed that the bright young man, whose brilliance should have been his key to the Yeshivah, had no problem stepping on the leaves that had once been part of a mitzvah. The other student, although weaker, pushed the leaves aside and walked around them. He would not step on an object that had, until recently, been a vital component in a mitzvah. I am not interested in accepting a student in my yeshivah who is not sensitive to the enduring sanctity of mitzvos. Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates how a distinguished Bnei Brak family inculcated their children with positive character traits. Every Friday night, following the Shabbos meal, the children would gather at the table for Oneg Shabbos during which they would partake of some sweets, amid conversation and story-telling. During these sessions, every child was to relate a laudable action which had occurred in the home. The children basically stopped their rivalry. There was no discord, no fights; everyone got along. If each one was to relate a positive episode about his or her sibling, they were always on the lookout for good things, positive activity - not what is the norm in our contentiously-oriented society. This practice spread, altering the children's outlook on all people. They were always looking for something good to say about them.

Indeed, positive character traits and the performance of good deeds are what truly define a person. At the end of the day, one's actions speak loudest. Horav Chaim Ozer Grodzenski, zl, Rav of Vilna, came to visit Horav Eliyahu Chaim Meisel, zl, Rav of Lodz. Rav Chaim Ozer did not come empty-handed. He brought as a gift his brilliant sefer, *Achiezer*. The Rav of Lodz was very grateful and expressed his gratitude profoundly.

Rav Chaim Ozer asked, "When will his honor publish his sefer?" Rav Eliyahu Chaim replied, "Oh, but I do have a sefer.

"I was unaware," countered Rav Chaim Ozer. "May I see it?" he asked.

"Sure," replied Rav Eliyahu Chaim. "Come with me." The Lodzer Rav brought him over to a desk, opened the drawer, and showed him letters of credit, wherein he had undertaken to support a number of widows, orphans, and Torah scholars who were without ample means. "This is my sefer! Zeh sefer toldos Adam, "This is the account (book) of the descendants /generations of man" (Bereishis 5:1)/ A person's good deeds are his sefer. I am too busy with this sefer to author my novellae."

Rav Chaim Ozer did not respond. A number of years later, when he was at death's door, he intimated to Horav Yosef Mishkovsky, zl, that he now understands the profound words of the Lodzer Rav. The real "book" of man is comprised of his good deeds and character traits. This is what he brings with him to his eternal resting place.

**Va'ani Tefillah**

**Malah ha'aretz kinyanecha. The earth is filled with Your possessions.**

Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, notes that the word kinyanecha has a deeper meaning. In Jewish law, a kinyan is an act of acquisition. When one acquires an object, he must execute a kinyan as proof of

possession. Thus, kinyanecha should be translated as: "The earth is filled with proofs of Your possession." When a non-believer (if such a creature exists) studies nature, he looks for every excuse to deny Hashem's existence. The "Big-Bang" theory - which is the parent of all the "accidents," "coincidences," and "random occurrences" of nature - is his way of explaining the origin of the world's existence. The believer, of course, sees Hashem in every blade of grass. Malah ha'aretz kinyanecha, "The entire earth is filled with Your proofs of possession" We sense Hashem's ownership wherever we look. Rav Schwab relates that, upon flying in a jet plane over the clouds for the very first time, he was amazed at the clear beauty of Creation. When he davened and came to these words, he was very emotional. Relating this to Rav Yosef Breuer, zl, he emphasized the tremendous boost in kavanah, concentration, and awareness he had at that moment. Rav Breuer replied, "I have this same feeling when I look at a simple daisy." We must see Hashem in all of His creations. Rav Schwab quotes Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl, who said that as one is impressed by a loud thunderclap, so, too, should he be awe-inspired upon drinking a glass of water. The creation of water is just as much the result of Hashem's power as the thunderclap. I had the opportunity this year to speak at the birthday party of a friend who had just turned 95 years old. I explained that it is no different for Hashem to make a 95 year old age than it is for Him to continue the life of a child. We are all proofs of His possession. In memory of Rabbi Justin Hofmann Harav Yekusiel ben Yosef z"l Beloved husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather niftar 25 Cheshvan 5770 Sophie Hofmann and family

---

From TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org>  
To weeklydt@torahweb2.org

**Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky**  
**The TorahWeb Foundation**  
**The Challenge of Tefillas Mincha**

*"Vateitze Yitzchok Lasuach basodeh lifnos erev" (Breshis 24:63)*

Chazal (Berachos 26b) derived from this passuk that Yitzchak instituted tefilas Mincha. Tefilas Shacharis had already been instituted by Avraham and later in Parshas Vayeitze, Yaakov will establish tefilas Arvis. Each of the tefilos of the avos corresponded to the events in their lives and to the relationships they had with their contemporaries.

Avraham was treated with great respect by those around him. He is referred to as a nesi Elokim - a prince of Hashem. He is victorious in battle against the four powerful kings and is sought after by Avimelech to enter into a treaty. It was appropriate for Avraham to establish the tefilah recited in the morning, since the sun shone on Avraham as he personified the strength and vigor of one beginning a new day.

Yitzchok had a more difficult relationship with those around him. He is envied, despised and eventually told to leave the land of Gerar. His life is not in danger, yet the sun that had once shone over his father is obviously about to set. Tefilas Mincha, which is recited as night is approaching is the legacy of Yitzchok.

Yaakov lives in a time of darkness. He escapes death at the hands of Esav only to suffer in the house of Lavan. Subsequently his life was once again in danger after fleeing from Lavan. Yaakov, whose very existence is synonymous with night, was the first to recite tefilas Mincha.

Following Chazal who saw in the lives of the avos foreshadowing of later events in Jewish history, the three tefilos of the avos set the stage for three distinct periods in our history. Chazal (Rosh Hashana

18b), while discussing the status of fast days associated with the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, divide Jewish history into three categories. During times of peace, these days become times of celebration. When there are decrees of persecution, it is obligatory to fast on these days. At times of neither complete peace nor persecution, these fast days are voluntary. Although we have accepted to fast on these days even during times of no outright persecution, technically, these three categories govern the status of these days as actual fast days.

Each distinct era in our history was foreshadowed by the lives and tefilos of the avos. Avraham taught us to daven during times of peace, whereas Yaakov is our model during times of darkness. We emulate Yitzchak when we are somewhere in between the morning of Avraham and the night of Yaakov.

The tefilah of Yitzchok is perhaps the most difficult one. Dovid Hamelech describes Tehillim two times of tefillah: "kos yeshu'os esah u'vesheim Hashem ekra" during times of great salvation I call upon Hashem and "tzarah v'yagon emtza u'b'sheim Hashem ekra" - during times of great distress I call upon Hashem. It is fairly simple to approach Hashem during these times. Feelings of gratitude or fear encourage one to turn to Hashem through tefillah. It is much more difficult to do so when one is neither in a state of intense joy nor in great despair.

Most of our lives are neither moments of kos yeshu'os esah nor tzarah v'yagon emtza. Both as individuals and as a nation we are faced with the challenge to maintain our connection to Hashem during the "regular" days. The times when the sun is not necessarily shining so brightly, yet not quite dark are the times when we tend to neglect our obligation of tefillah. It is the legacy of Yitzchok to turn to Hashem even during these times.

Copyright © 2011 by The TorahWeb Foundation. All rights reserved.

---

From Rabbi Yissocher Frand ryfrand@torah.org &  
genesis@torah.org  
To ravfrand@torah.org  
Subject Rabbi Frand on Parsha

**Rabbi Yissocher Frand :: Parshas Chayei Sarah**

***Nothing Would Have Interrupted Yitzchak On His Way To Service of G-d***

At the end of the story of Eliezer going to find a mate for Yitzchak, the Torah describes the first meeting of Yitzchak and Rivka [Bereshis 24:62-67]. The narrative begins with the words "Now Yitzchak came from having gone to the Well of L'Chai-Roee..."

Rabbeinu Avraham ben HaRambam wonders regarding the significance of the fact that Yitzchak had returned from this well. Who cares where he had just returned from when he met Rivka for the first time? Rabbeinu Avraham ben HaRambam gives a very interesting answer. The Well of L'Chai-Roee was the place where Yitzchak regularly davened [prayed]. When Yitzchak needed privacy and seclusion, he retreated to this place. The Torah stresses that this event occurred on his way BACK from the place, not on his way TOWARDS the place of the Well of L'Chai-Roee. The purpose is to teach us the following lesson: Had Yitzchak been on his way to execute his Service to G-d, even the arrival of Eliezer and Rivka would not have distracted him. It is only because he had finished praying and was now returning from this place that he took note of the arrival of his father's trusted servant and the young woman brought for him from Aram Naharaim to be his future wife.

Rav Moshe Shapiro wonders why it was that in previous generations, Europe produced students who were expert in all aspects of Torah

knowledge and in our times, it does not produce such great Torah luminaries. Rav Shapiro suggests that it is because their diligence and focus was so laser-like in their formative years that they grew up to be the people they became later in life. Unfortunately, in our day and age, there are so many distractions to our Avodas Hashem [Service to G-d] and to our learning that we just do not produce the same type of Gedolim.

Rav Shapiro tells the story that Rav Chatzkel Abramsky once went over to a student and asked him where he was during seder [the fixed-time set aside for learning in the Yeshiva]. The young man explained that he went to a wedding and that the wedding was in a different city. The student explained that it took him 3 hours to travel back and forth to the wedding each way. Rav Abramsky was dumbfounded that this student spent so much time just to go to the wedding of a friend. Rav Abramsky told him that he himself went to only two weddings the entire time he was a young man -- one was his sister's wedding and one was his own wedding!

When people have that type of intense focus in learning (hasmadah), with an intensity that is so strong that nothing can derail them from Torah study, then they may grow up to be people of the caliber of Rav Chatzkel Abramsky.

This, according to Rav Avraham ben HaRambam, is what the pasuk is emphasizing here by describing the fact that Yitzchak met his bride AFTER he returned from Be'er L'Chai-Roe. On the way there, nothing would have derailed him.

We obviously are not on the level to aspire to such single-minded focus in our Divine Service. However, it is important for us and for our children to understand the significance of any time that we must take off from our learning and our Service to G-d. This is how Gedolim are produced.

#### ***Avraham Died A Happy Man -- For Good Reason***

The pasuk states that Avraham expired and died at a ripe old age when he was elderly and satisfied with his life (zaken v'Saveah) and he was gathered into his people [Bereshis 25:8]. The Ramban says the expression "zaken v'Saveah" teaches us how G-d deals with the righteous -- he grants them everything they desire. However, the Ramban says, the expression also teaches us an important lesson regarding the righteous people themselves: They are satisfied with their lot in life and they do not desire luxuries. They do not follow the pattern of desire expressed about most people -- that they can never get enough -- "Those who love money will never be satisfied with money" [Koheles 5:9]. The Midrash states that typically when a person dies, he does not even achieve half of what he desired in life. Avraham Avinu was not like that. He died a satisfied man, because he was happy with whatever he had. He did not lust after excesses. If one is happy with what he has then he has everything. One who is not happy with what he has never has enough.

Rav Simcha Zissel points out that this is the only place in the Torah where the Torah eulogizes a person. When all of the other Biblical personalities die, the Torah merely records their death and sometimes their age. The Torah normally does not provide editorial comment upon the death of a person. No "tombstone material" is provided. Even the comment "There arose no more in Israel a prophet like Moshe" was not meant, Rav Simcha Zissel explains, as praise but was teaching us the halacha that no one in the future would be able to override the prophecy of Moshe Rabbeinu. The only exception to this lack of eulogy is what the Torah writes about Avraham Avinu. Now, what is the greatest thing that can be said about Avraham Avinu? If I had to write Avraham Avinu's eulogy, I would have said "This is Avraham Avinu who withstood the Ten Trials." Perhaps I would praise him for allowing himself to be thrown into the fire in Ur Kasdim rather than bow down to idols. Perhaps I would praise him

for drawing thousands of people to belief in monotheism. The last thing I would think to say about Avraham in a eulogy was that he died when he was old and content (zaken v'Saveah). Why does the Torah select this?

The Torah is saying that the greatness of Avraham was that he died a happy man. The Torah is telling us that he died a satisfied man because he had no great desires. He was satisfied with a little.

In Lech Lecha, Hashem comes to Avraham and tells him that after 90 years, Sarah will have a baby. Avraham falls on his face in gratitude. What is his reaction to the news? He should say "finally! Thank G-d!" However, what does Avraham say? "Let only Yishmael live before you." Rashi explains this remark: "I am unworthy to receive such a great reward, I would be happy if only you allow Yishmael to live before You." Avraham's reaction to this wonderful news is that he does not deserve it. The birth of Yishmael is already ample reward for all that he had done.

Such is the attitude of a person who does not go through life with an "It's coming to me" (es kumpt mir) philosophy. The opposite of the Yiddish expression "es kumpt mir" is "es kumpt mir gornisht" which means I deserve nothing. I take nothing for granted. Every little gift is a bonanza! This was exactly the attitude of Avraham. That is why he died a very happy and satisfied man and that is why the Torah praised him with this behavior.

When the Chofetz Chaim finished writing the Mishna Berurah, he said, "Ribbono shel Olam you have been so good to me. How can I finally pay You back?" If you or I wrote the Mishna Berurah, our attitude would most likely be "G-d, I wrote the Mishna Berurah. I put the Orach Chaim on the map for You. Now it is my turn. When is it going to be payback time?"

The Chofetz Chaim's reaction was just the opposite. "Hashem, You have been so good to me by allowing me to complete the Mishna Berurah. How can I ever repay You?" This is so different from how we typically go through life, so different from the attitude that He owes us so much. This is why we have so many unhappy people. If we are owed so much and we do not get it then we go through life being unhappy. Not so was the attitude of our Patriarch Avraham, who died at an old age, satisfied with his lot (zaken v'saveah).

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by David Hoffman, Baltimore, MD

RavFrاند, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org.

---

<http://www.torahinmotion.org>

A Thought for the Week with Rabbi Jay Kelman

#### **A Thought for the Week with Rabbi Jay Kelman Parshat Chayei Sarah - Growing Old Staying Young**

Rabbi Jay Kelman "And Sarah lived one hundred years, twenty years and seven years; these are the years of Sarah's life" (source).

A famous rabbinic comment elucidating the triple expression of years teaches that Sarah maintained her stunning beauty, intuitive wisdom and sinless innocence throughout her life. Furthermore, the seemingly superfluous ending of the verse "these are the years of Sarah's life" teaches, in the words of Rashi, that her years "were all equally good".

Rav Soloveitchik explains that, for Sarah, these periods of life were not mutually exclusive. Sarah combined the innocence of childhood, the vigour of young adulthood and the maturity of a developed adult throughout her life, all at the same time. Newborn babies, totally dependent on others for survival, develop complete trust in the nurturing parents who take care of their every need. They learn to see

the beautiful world that G-d created, and recognize that all is "very good". The challenges and difficulties that we all eventually face are years away. Their beautiful naiveté is not yet spoiled by the deceit, the lies and corruption that are so inevitably a part of human nature. In their youthful enthusiasm, as they enter adolescence and early adulthood and begin to understand the challenges of life, many still see the potential of a world at peace where we work together for the benefit of all. But alas, as we grow a little older and come face to face with the world of falsehood that surrounds us, we tend to become more realistic. We replace idealism with pragmatism; our focus shifts from the world around us to our own personal world. We may lament the loss of our dreams, but feel hopeless and helpless to do anything about it. It is the rare individual who can remain a young child or mature adolescent at heart, even as their body ages. Sarah was such an individual, and it is she who is the founding mother of the Jewish people.

Sarah had another quality that set her apart. While still a child, she had the maturity, the intellectual rigor, and the sophistication of an adult. She was truly "wise beyond her years". The true greatness of Sarah was not just found in her combination of youthful energy with wisdom gained from a lifetime of experience. It was in her ability to know when to see things as a child and when it was an adult perspective that was needed; when to trust others and when to display a healthy dose of cynicism.

Rav Soloveitchik beautifully explains that this is the difference between two of our most fundamental mitzvot, prayer and Talmud Torah. One can truly pray only with the heart of a child. Prayer requires that we surrender ourselves to G-d, with complete trust in the only true Provider. One must be willing (and able) to bare our souls, to cry out to G-d. Faced with needs, we beseech G-d to provide for us. The sophisticated adult, with defense mechanisms in full force, cannot do so. This may help to explain why our generation finds prayer so difficult. Our amazing accomplishments delude us into believing that we are completely in control of the world, stifling our understanding that nothing happens without G-d.

On the other hand, only an adult can really learn Torah. Those qualities that make prayer so effective would render our learning superficial. True Torah study requires intellectual sophistication, in-depth analysis, creative thinking; the ability to dig deeply for truth, even if it means disagreeing with our great predecessors. Real Torah study does not focus on Midrashic stories about Abraham smashing idols, number games or cute divrei Torah.

Rav Soloveitchik was fond of saying that his grandfather, Rav Chaim Soloveitchik, saved Torah in 19th-century Europe by demonstrating that Talmudic learning could compete with—and surpass—the intellectual rigour offered by the best of the scientific world. The Lithuanian yeshiva world emphasized the depth and complexity of Torah, and many Jews who no longer observed Jewish law continued the most enjoyable of intellectual pursuits, the study of Torah.

It is revealing that, while the Lithuanian world focused on Torah study, the Chassidic world focused on prayer; sometimes, it seems as if the two are mutually exclusive. It is the rare person who can follow in the footsteps of Sarah Immenu, praying like a child, learning like an adult, with the energy of youth. May we aim to be that person. Rabbi Kelman, in addition to his founder and leadership roles in Torah in Motion, teaches Ethics, Talmud and Rabbinics at the Community Hebrew Academy of Toronto.

---

From Jeffrey Gross <jgross@torah.org>  
reply-To neustadt@torah.org, genesis@torah.org  
To weekly-halacha@torah.org  
Subject Weekly Halacha - Parshas Terumah

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt (dneustadt@cordetroit.com)  
Yoshev Rosh - Vaad HaRabanim of Detroit

## **Weekly Halacha** **by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt**

### ***Honoring Parents: Basic Requirements***

The sensitivity that one must have in performing the mitzvah of kibbud av v'eim, honoring one's parents, is expressed in our Sages' comment on the verse quoted above. The Rabbis criticize Yosef for not objecting to hearing his revered father described as "your servant, our father." Even though Yosef was not at liberty to reveal his identity at the time, he is nevertheless faulted for not being offended by the desecration of his father's honor. This teaches us that it is not enough to merely honor and fear one's parents in their presence. Even when they are not physically present, we are commanded to see that their honor is not compromised in any way. Let us explain:

There are two major categories under which the halachos of conduct towards parents are subsumed: kibbud, honoring them, and mora, revering them.

**Kibbud Av V'eim—Honoring Parents**

Kibbud is accomplished in three different ways:

1. Through the children's thoughts—children are supposed to view their parents as being honorable and respected people, even if they are not considered as such in the eyes of others. This attitudinal aspect of the mitzvah is the main part of kibbud.<sup>2</sup>
2. Through the children's actions—this includes feeding, dressing and escorting them, and generally assisting them in all of their needs as a servant would do for his master. These actions must be done b'sever panim yafos, pleasantly and enthusiastically. The manner in which one assists parents is a crucial aspect of the mitzvah.<sup>3</sup> Even if the child is in the midst of learning Torah, he must stop to assist his parents.<sup>4</sup>
3. Through the children's speech—e.g., when a child is honored, he should credit his parents for the honor bestowed upon him. When a child asks others to grant his request or to do him a favor, he should not request it in his own merit, but rather, in the merit of his father or mother (when applicable).<sup>5</sup>

Parents may excuse<sup>6</sup> their children from the mitzvah of kibbud. In fact, it is advisable for them to do so. A parent who constantly exacts respect from his children will surely cause his children to be punished on his account.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, although according to the halachah<sup>8</sup> a child should rise to his full height when a parent enters<sup>9</sup> the room,<sup>10</sup> in practice this halachah is not widely observed. It is safe to assume that most parents excuse their children from demonstrating this honor towards them,<sup>11</sup> and since they do, the children are not obligated to rise in their honor.<sup>12</sup> It is required though, that children ask their parents explicitly if they excuse them from demonstrating this kibbud.<sup>13</sup>

Reciting Kaddish after a parent's death falls into the category of kibbud.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, some poskim rule that a parent may excuse his child from saying Kaddish after his passing.<sup>15</sup> But other poskim hold that the son should ignore his father's request and recite Kaddish.<sup>16</sup>

The twelve-month mourning period in which children mourn their parents is a form of kibbud.<sup>17</sup> Parents may, therefore, absolve their children from keeping the laws of the twelve-month mourning period.<sup>18</sup>

**Mora Av V'eim—Revering Parents**

The second category of the halachos governing the conduct of children to parents is mora, reverence, or fear. It means that one should act towards his parents as he would towards a sovereign with

the power to punish those who treat him disrespectfully.<sup>19</sup> Specifically, this commandment prohibits a child from sitting in his parents' set places at home or in shul, interrupting them, contradicting them (in an abrupt or disrespectful manner) and calling them by their first names.<sup>20</sup>

Most poskim maintain that parents may also excuse their children from the mitzvah of *mora*.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, some parents permit their children to sit in their father's place in shul, since parents are not particular about this show of respect.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, if a parent solicits his child's opinion, the child may express his honest opinion even if it differs from the parent's,<sup>23</sup> since by soliciting his child's opinion the parent waives his right not to be contradicted.

Parents may not, however, allow themselves to be degraded, hit or cursed by their children. Such actions are never excusable.<sup>24</sup>

Even if a parent is, G-d forbid, insane and has embarrassed the child in public, it is still forbidden for the child to shame or degrade the parent.<sup>25</sup> He may, however, take steps to ensure that his parents do not cause him or themselves public embarrassment, e.g., one may arrange to have his parents barred from a public gathering, etc.<sup>26</sup>

When an elderly father lives with his son, the son is not required to give up his seat at the head of the table,<sup>27</sup> although the custom in many homes is to do so.<sup>28</sup> In any case, the son must allow his father to wash his hands first and to be served first,<sup>29</sup> etc.

A son should preferably not daven *Shemoneh Esrei* within four amos [approximately eight feet] of his father.<sup>30</sup>

If her husband objects, a married woman is not required to honor her parents by performing the physical acts that constitute "honor," such as feeding them, escorting them, etc. She is, however, obligated to revere them and to avoid demeaning them.<sup>31</sup> Obedience

In general, children should honor a parent's wish even if the parent does not "benefit" from the child's compliance. For instance, a mother disapproves of a certain article of clothing and asks her daughter not to wear it. By honoring her mother's request the daughter gives her mother no tangible, material benefit, so the laws of *kibbud* do not apply.<sup>32</sup> But if the daughter disobeys and insists on wearing that article of clothing, she is violating her mother's wishes which may be forbidden under the obligation of *mora*, reverence.<sup>33</sup>

Still, the poskim are in agreement that when the parent's request will cause the child a financial loss, significant pain or anguish, or will interfere with the child's Torah studies, the child need not obey. A child is not considered to have violated his parent's wish when he does so for a legitimate reason (and the parent does not stand to gain any material "benefit" from the child's compliance). Thus there are many cases when children may not be halachically required to follow a parent's directive. Some of those include when and where to study Torah<sup>34</sup> or daven,<sup>35</sup> whom to marry<sup>36</sup> and whether or not to live in Eretz Yisrael.<sup>37</sup>

Obviously, though, a child should realize that it is invariably in his best interest to heed the wise and loving advice of his experienced parents. A decision not to abide by a parent's wishes should be made only after much thought and after consultation with a competent halachic authority.

1 Sotah 13b.

2 Chayei Adam 67:3. See explanation in *Sichos Mussar* (5731, Ma'amar 22).

3 Y.D. 240:4.

4 Pischei Teshuvah 240:8; Rav S.Z. Auerbach (oral ruling quoted in *Kibbud v'Yiras Horim K'hilchasam*, pg. 25).

5 Y.D. 240:5; Chayei Adam 67:5.

6 The parents may change their mind and revoke their dispensation; Maharam Shick, Y.D. 218.

7 Y.D. 240:19. See *Alei Shur*, pg. 261 for elaboration.

8 This is a Biblical obligation; Rosh, *Kiddushin* 1:57. There are various views in the poskim as to how many times per day this obligation applies; see Chayei Adam 67:7; Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:24; Shevet ha-Levi 1:111-4; Avnei Yashfei 1:185.

9 According to some poskim, the obligation to stand up for a parent begins when the child hears their footsteps; see Gilyon Maharsha, Y.D. 240:7 and Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:24. But many other poskim rule that the obligation begins only upon seeing them; see Chayei Adam 67:7; Chazon Ish, Y.D. 149:10; Shevet ha-Levi 2:111-4.

10 Y.D. 240:7. This is an obligation of *kibbud*; Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:24; Chazon Ish, Y.D. 149:4; Gesher ha-Chayim 20:9.

11 See *Sefer Chasidim* 152 and 339.

12 Even when parents have exempted their children from honoring them, if the children honor them they are fulfilling a mitzvah; Rav Akiva Eiger and Pischei Teshuvah, Y.D. 240:16.

13 Rav Y.S. Elyashiv, quoted in Avnei Yashfei 1:185 and in *Mora ha-Horim v'Kibbudam*, pg. 49.

14 Chayei Adam 67:6.

15 Pischei Teshuvah, Y.D. 344:1, quoting Even Shoam.

16 See Shoel u' Meishiv 3:259, Even Yaakov 47 and Yabia Omer 6, Y.D. 31-4.

17 See *Igros Moshe*, Y.D. 1:255.

18 Shach, Y.D. 244:9; Chochmas Adam 155:10; Gilyon Maharsha, Y.D. 240:9. *Sedei Chemed*, Aveilus 1. See *Divrei Malkiel* 4:96 who disagrees.

19 Rambam, *Sefer ha-Mitzvos* 211.

20 Y.D. 240:2.

21 *Birkei Yosef* 240:13. See also *Igros Moshe*, Y.D. 1:133.

22 Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:9.

23 Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:13.

24 *Teshuvos Rivash* 220; *Meishiv Davar* 2:50. See *Minchas Shelomo* 1:32.

25 Y.D. 240:8-10.

26 Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:32. See *Tzitz Eliezer* 12:59.

27 Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:11.

28 *She'arim ha-Metzuyanin B'halachah* 143:2. Rav S.Z. Auerbach, Rav Y.S. Elyashiv and Rav C.P. Scheinberg are quoted (*Mora ha-Horim v'Kibbudam*, pg. 19; *Kibbud v'Yiras Horim K'hilchasam*, pg. 62) as ruling that it is proper for the son to offer his seat to his father. If the father declines, then the son may sit there.

29 Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:11; Rav Y.S. Elyashiv and Rav B.Z. Abba Shaul (oral ruling quoted in *Mora ha-Horim v'Kibbudam*, pg. 19).

30 O.C. 90:24 and *Mishnah Berurah* 73, 77, 78. See *Beur Halachah*, s.v. *vaf al pi*.

31 Y.D. 240:17, Shach 19 and Aruch ha-Shulchan 38. See, however, *Tzitz Eliezer* 16:28.

32 This is the position of most poskim; see *The Fifth Commandment*, pg. 126, for the entire list.

33 Based on *Hamakneh*, *Kidushim* 31b and *Teshuvos Rav Akiva Eiger* 1:68.

34 Y.D. 240:13 and Pischei Teshuvah 8. See *Minchas Yitzchak* 5:79 and *Koveitz Teshuvos* 3:139.

35 Pischei Teshuvah, Y.D. 240:22, quoting *Chamudei Doniel*.

36 Rama, Y.D. 240:25.

1. See *Tzitz Eliezer* 14:72 and *Yechaveh Da'as* 3:69 and 4:49.

*Weekly-Halacha*, *Weekly Halacha*, Copyright © 2010 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Torah.org.

Rabbi Neustadt is the *Yoshev Rosh* of the *Vaad Harabbonim* of Detroit and the *Av Beis Din* of the *Beis Din Tzedek* of Detroit. He could be reached at [dneustadt@cordetroit.com](mailto:dneustadt@cordetroit.com)