

# OHRNET

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### THE GOOD LIFE

*“Sarah’s lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years; the years of Sarah’s life.” (23:1)*

The millionaire had no doubt as to whom he would not leave his vast fortune. His son. His son was a professional layabout who could give a three-year course in idleness without a note of preparation.

One day he called his son and announced his intention to leave his riches to charity.

Faced with this catastrophe, the son hurried to his chief advisor and confidante — his mother.

“Look,” she said, “here’s a fifty dollar bill. Go and tell your father that you earned this and that you are really worthy to be his inheritor.”

The son approached his father, waiving the fifty dollar bill in his hand, “Father, look at this, I earned this money myself.”

“Let me see that!” said the father. Taking the fifty-dollar bill in his hand, he laughed, “You earned this! Pheh!” And with that, the father deftly incinerated the fifty-dollar bill with his cigar.

The son returned to his mother and told her what had happened.

“Okay,” she said, “try again! Take this fifty dollar bill and tell him that you worked all morning for it.”

The second bill received a reception identical to the first— instant cigarine immolation.

Dejected, the son returned to his mother. “Listen,” she said, “why don’t you go down to the town square and see if you can get a job. Maybe that will work.”

The son made his way to the town square. For some considerable time, he tried to find a job. Eventually, someone gave him an hour’s work schlepping some very heavy kegs of beer into a cellar.

And for this hour’s work, he received the princely sum of five dollars.

Immediately he ran to his father and showed him the

money.

“Father! Look, I made this money just now!” The father took the bill and as the cigar approached the hapless bill, the son cried out, “Stop! You know how hard I worked for that money?”

“Ahh!” said the father, “This money you earned!”

*“Sarah’s lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years; the years of Sarah’s life.”*

Rashi tells us that the reason why the Torah repeats the word “years” between each number, “one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years...” is that each section of Sarah’s life exemplified an outstanding quality.

For example, at the age of one hundred, she was as sinless as a twenty year-old (The Torah only mandates Heavenly punishment from twenty years old and above.)

You don’t clock up a hundred sinless years without a lot of hard work.

But why should it be such hard work?

G-d created the whole universe just so man could experience the greatest pleasure that exists — being close to Him. Compared to this pleasure everything else is as valuable as a glass diamond.

But if the purpose of the world is for us to have pleasure, why is it such hard work to get there?

It’s axiomatic that G-d is the ultimate Good that can be. Since His desire was to do good to another entity — man, it follows that that Good must be the best Good possible. If we were to get the Good without working for it, we would feel like a pauper feels when someone drops a coin in his hand. “I don’t really deserve this.” To avoid this, G-d gives us the Good by our trying to earn it.

Then a five-dollar bill feels a lot more than fifty dollars.

• Sources: Rashi, Ramchal

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

**S**arah, Mother of the Jewish People, passes on at age 127. After mourning and eulogizing her, Avraham seeks to bury her in the Cave of Machpela. As this is the burial place of Adam and Chava, Avraham pays its owner, Ephron the Hittite, an exorbitant sum. Avraham sends his faithful servant Eliezer to find a suitable wife for his son, Yitzchak, making him swear to choose a wife only from among Avraham's family. Eliezer travels to Aram Naharaim and prays for a sign. Providentially, Rivka appears. Eliezer asks for water. Not only does she give him water, but she draws water for all 10 of his thirsty

camels. (Some 140 gallons!) This extreme kindness marks her as the right wife for Yitzchak and a suitable Mother of the Jewish People. Negotiations with Rivka's father and her brother Lavan result in her leaving with Eliezer. Yitzchak brings Rivka into his mother Sarah's tent, marries her and loves her. He is then consoled for the loss of his mother. Avraham remarries Hagar who is renamed Ketura to indicate her improved ways. Six children are born to them. After giving them gifts, Avraham sends them to the East. Avraham passes away at the age of 175 and is buried next to Sarah in the Cave of Machpela.

## ISRAEL *Forever*

### THE PROMISED LAND

**A**lthough our forefather Avraham was promised by G-d that Eretz Yisrael in its entirety would belong to him he had to purchase a burial plot for his wife Sarah. Avraham maintained his faith that the Divine promise would be kept when the right time came and offered no complaint.

This episode that appears at the beginning of this week's Torah portion was echoed in the life of Avraham's son Yitzchak who had to contend with the Philistines over the wells he had dug in the Land that was promised to him as

well. The third of the Patriarchs, Yaakov, had to buy a piece of land in Shechem to pitch his tent upon his return to the Land that was promised to him.

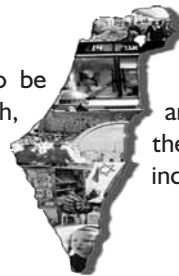
All of our forefathers thus taught us to be patient in regard to the Heavenly promise regarding our Promised Land. We too must maintain our faith in G-d that the time will come when no one will challenge the right of the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov to all of Israel forever.

## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE WISDOM

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

### THE CAVE AND ITS OWNERS

**T**he first of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs to be buried in the Cave of Machpelah was Sarah, about whose death and burial we read in this week's Torah portion.



It is important, in light of modern Arab claims to the area, that this burial site was purchased by our forefather Avraham from Ephron the Hittite and it is therefore indisputably the property of his descendants.

*Special Mazel Tov to the*  
**LAUFFER & REICHMANN FAMILIES**  
*on the occasion of the wedding of their children*

## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Name the four couples buried in *Kiryat Arba*.
2. What did Sarah hear that caused her death?
3. What title of honor did the *B'nei Chet* bestow upon Avraham?
4. Where was Avraham born?
5. How were Avraham's camels distinguished?
6. What is meant by "all the good of his master in his hand?"
7. What special character trait did Eliezer seek when choosing a wife for Yitzchak?
8. Why did Avraham's servant, Eliezer, run toward Rivka?
9. Why did Lavan run to greet Eliezer?
10. When Lavan told Eliezer that the house was cleared out, what did he remove?
11. Who did Eliezer want Yitzchak to marry?
12. Aside from Eliezer, to which other people did Rivka offer to give water?
13. Lavan answered Eliezer before his father, Betuel, had a chance. What does this indicate about Lavan's character?
14. What did Rivka mean when she said "I will go"?
15. What blessing did Rivka's family give her before she departed?
16. Who was *Ketura*?
17. What gift did Avraham give to Yitzchak?
18. How old was Avraham when he died?
19. For how many years did Yaakov attend the Yeshiva of *Ever*?
20. How many times is Eliezer's name mentioned in this week's Parsha?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 23:2 - Adam and Chava, Avraham and Sarah, Yitzchak and Rivka, Yaakov and Leah.
2. 23:2 - That Yitzchak was almost slaughtered.
3. 23:6 - Prince of G-d.
4. 24:7 - Ur Kasdim.
5. 24:10 - They were muzzled, so they wouldn't graze in the fields of others.
6. 24:10 - Eliezer carried a document in which Avraham gave all he owned to Yitzchak so that people would want their daughter to marry him.
7. 24:14 - He sought someone who excelled in performing acts of kindness.
8. 24:17 - He saw that the waters of the well rose when she approached.
9. 24:29 - Lavan coveted his money.
10. 24:31 - Idols.
11. 24:39 - His own daughter.
12. 24:44 - To the men who accompanied Eliezer.
13. 24:50 - That he was wicked.
14. 24:58 - I will go even if you don't want me to go.
15. 24:60 - That the blessings given to Avraham would continue through her children.
16. 25:1 - Hagar.
17. 25:5 - The power of blessing.
18. 25:7 - 175 years old.
19. 25:17 - 14 years.
20. None!

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# LOVE of the LAND

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## A MATTER OF MOTIVE

**N**akdiman ben Gurion was one of the legendary men of wealth in Jerusalem during the Roman siege of the city. When his destitute daughter explained the loss of his fortune as a result of the failing to give charity, this was met with surprise by the Talmudic Sages. After all, it was known that when Nakdiman walked from his home to the Beit Midrash expensive carpets were spread for him that the poor subsequently were invited to appropriate for themselves.

Two resolutions are offered for this conflict between his charitable action and the criticism of his charitable record. One is that his giving was in no way proportionate to his wealth. Another is that his giving was motivated by a desire for honor.

This criticism of his motivation seems to run counter to what the *gemara* (*Pesachim* 8a) states about one who makes a charitable donation so that his son should live or that he himself should gain the World to Come. Despite the fact that he has a selfish motivation he is considered

a perfectly righteous man.

Why then is the motivation of honor any different?

Maharasha solves this puzzle by referring to a distinction made by *Tosefot* (*Pesachim* 8b) between one who will not regret his charitable commitment even if his wish is not granted by Heaven and one who will. When one is motivated by honor alone, it seems, there is a serious danger that he will regret his charity if that honor is not accorded to him. He is therefore considered to be delinquent in his charity obligations and forfeits his right to wealth.

It is interesting to note the sharp criticism of some charitable Jews of his day that Maharsha offers at the conclusion of this explanation. These people earned money in dishonest fashion and then donated it to charity in order to gain honor. Not only is this considered performing a mitzvah through a sin, but, as we see from the example of Nakdiman, their wealth will not endure.

The fact that institutions and organizations do indeed honor their benefactors with banquets and plaques is not a contradiction to the above. There is a sacred purpose in publicizing the good done by individuals so that others will follow in their footsteps.

## WHAT THE Sages SAY

“One who wishes to preserve his wealth should deplete it by giving charity.”

- A motto of Jerusalem Jews quoted to Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai by the daughter of Nakdiman ben Gurion - *Ketubot* 66b

## CLOTHES MINDED JEWS

**From: Daniel Branower**

*Dear Rabbi:*

*Why do many Torah observant Jews who live in Israel dress in a European style, as opposed to a more Mediterranean or "native" style? If the idea is that Jews are returning from exile to Eretz Yisrael, their ancestral home, why the adherence to the traditions and customs of the previous exile home? Thank you.*

Dear Daniel,

There is no particular "Jewish" style or mode of dress. There are requirements and prohibitions regarding covering the body and one's general appearance, but these are related to modesty and humility more than ethnicity. For example, a man must cover his head, torso, upper arms, waist and legs to the knees. In addition, a woman is required to cover her arms and legs below the elbow and knees, while a married woman must also cover her hair.

From a Jewish perspective, then, as long as the garments are acceptable in terms of properly and modestly covering the body (i.e. the clothes cover what's needed and are not tight-fitting, flashy or attract attention) any style or mode is okay. For this reason, over the ages and across the globe Jews have had a wide variety of wardrobes including togas, robes, shawls, coats, and suits and ties.

Usually, the general appearance of the clothes that Jews wore and wear is patterned after, or at least affected by, the style of the culture in which they live. This, of

course, is a function of climate, availability and social milieu. That being said, even if the surrounding non-Jews did not distinguish the Jew by dress, the Jews themselves usually maintained something distinctively Jewish up their sleeve. This might be as subtle as making an otherwise normal-looking garment specifically out of a number of pieces significant in Judaism such as 7 or 26 (corresponding to G-d's name), or folding lapels or buttons right-over-left instead of left-over-right.

Once a particular mode of dress becomes incorporated by Jews into Judaism it generally becomes interwoven into the fabric of Jewish belief, practice and ritual, thereby elevating it to the status of "Tradition". Sometimes this has the somewhat ironic result of Jews preserving initially non-Jewish modes of dress long after the non-Jews have divested themselves of them. Also, this can result in Jews transporting and maintaining a style unique to one particular time or place to another even if it doesn't fit there as well.

To a large extent, this is the case regarding Torah-observant Jews returning to or living in Israel. On the other hand, there was a sizable European community living in Israel before and during the Jews' return, and the Jews themselves became a majority over the indigenous Levantines relatively quickly such that the European influence was dominant. Nowadays, in most parts of the modern world, the European/Western mode of dress has become the accepted and expected mode of dress, particularly in formal, business and important contexts.

It is for these reasons that observant Jews, who take their more than 9-to-5 "jobs" seriously, have adopted the European style of dress, even if they're not of European origin, and even after having returned to Eretz Yisrael.

לע"נ

מרת יוטא רחל בת ר' יעקב יהודה ע"ה

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

## A LESSON FROM THE DELUGE

**Question:** I recently became aware of a truck carrying a load of surplus fruits and vegetables to a dumping destination. When it came to a brief halt very near where I stood I was very tempted to help myself to this produce that was in any case going to waste. What was the right thing to do?

**Answer:** A similar question was put to Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein by someone who had already surrendered to such temptation and asked whether he had acted in a proper fashion.

His response was that as long as the produce belonged to someone who, for marketing considerations, insisted on its destruction, it was illegal for anyone to avail himself of it. As support for labeling such action theft he cited the Midrash about G-d commanding Noah to avoid stealing from anyone in order to provide for his family and all the animals a year's supply of food while they were in the ark. Although Noah realized that all of this food — and its owners — would in any case be destroyed in the deluge, he refrained from stocking up with anything that he had not purchased.

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY \_\_\_\_\_

### AN ARRESTING SUCCAH DECORATION

When you walk into a succah you expect to see inspiring decorations such as colorful *ushpizin* charts and pictures of great rabbis. The succah of one young married Torah scholar in Israel, however, had an additional touch. On its walls hung some very official looking papers with Russian letters forming their text. When asked what they were all about he offered a truly touching explanation.

As a youngster back in Russia he became interested in

religion and began learning Torah in the Torat Chaim Yeshiva. His atheistic father strongly disapproved of this turn in the life of his son and asked the local police to forcibly bring him home. The boy determinedly returned to the yeshiva and arrest warrant followed arrest warrant until he was old enough to be independent and his father made peace with the situation.

It is those arrest warrants that formed the most striking decoration of the above-mentioned succah.

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