The Eyes of Truth

“And the servant (Eliezer) said to him (Avraham): ‘Perhaps the woman will not wish to follow me to this land, shall I take your son back to the land from which you departed?’” (24:5)

“Why can’t I see G-d? Why don’t I feel He’s there? I really envy you being religious, but I just don’t feel it!”

What makes a person feel close to G-d? The eyes are the windows of the soul. If you want to “see” G-d in your life, you have to have clean windows. All the character flaws that a person has are like grime on those windows. Anger, jealousy, lust, status seeking, all smear the windows of the soul so that it cannot see.

The Midrash on this verse says “And the servant said to him…” — this refers to the phrase A trader with scales of deceit in his hand, who loves to cheat.” The ‘trader’ is Eliezer, who sat and weighed — ‘with scales of deceit in his hand’ — whether his own daughter was fitting to be Yitzchak’s wife or not.” When Eliezer suggested the match, Avraham told him: “You are cursed, my son is blessed. The cursed cannot connect with the blessed.”

What was so wrong with Eliezer considering his daughter as a marriage partner for Yitzchak, that the Midrash calls him “a trader with scales of deceit in his hand”? Eliezer didn’t lie to, or cheat Avraham. He was merely wondering whether his daughter might be suitable. Which father would not at least consider if his daughter would be a worthy spouse for the world’s most eligible bachelor, the father-to-be of the Jewish people?

Also, when Avraham rejected Eliezer’s proposal, Eliezer accepted Avraham’s decision with total equanimity. It must be then that the mere fact that Eliezer had room to consider this possibility showed a minute trace of deceit. For if it were not so, he would have known without a second thought the truth — that the blessed and the cursed cannot combine.

continued on page four
He life of Sarah, mother of the Jewish People, comes to a close at the age of one hundred and twenty seven. After mourning and eulogizing her, Avraham buries her in the Cave of Machpela. As this is the burial place of Adam and Chava, Avraham is prepared to pay its owner Ephron the Hittite the exorbitant sum which he demands for the cave. Avraham places the responsibility for finding a suitable wife for his son Yitzchak on his faithful servant Eliezer, who takes an oath to choose a wife from amongst Avraham’s family and not from the Canaanites. Eliezer travels to Aram Naharaim, to the city of Nachor, and marries her and loves her. He is then consolled for the loss of his mother. Avraham remarries Hagar who is renamed Ketura to indicate her improved ways.

T he need to secure the succession of the Jewish People, which is the subject of this week’s Parsha, is reflected in the Haftorah. King David is coming to the end of his days (like Avraham in the Parsha) and his senior son, the handsome and indulgent Adonijah, tries to wrest the succession from Shlomo, King David’s appointed heir. But King David is alerted to Adonijah’s scheme by his wife Basheva and Nassan the prophet, and the plot is foiled.

T he Chafetz Chaim once wrote to a rich man that he was obliged to make a clear will dividing his property between his sons as we find in this week’s Haftorah. If the prophet Nassan admonished King David to leave clear instructions regarding his succession, certainly this rich man was obliged to do so. We do not find that David was annoyed at Nassan for reminding him of his mortality; rather he took steps to rectify a difficult situation. As the Chafetz Chaim wrote: “Children are known to disobey their parents and quarrel amongst themselves even during their parents’ lifetime, how much more so after their death!”

* Adapted from The Midrash Says

OTHER WORLDLY EXPERIENCES

"Whoever resides in Eretz Yisrael, recites the Shma in the morning and evening and speaks lashon hakodesh (the sacred Hebrew tongue) is considered a member of the World to Come."

This statement by Rabbi Meir (Sifrei Parshas Ha’azinu 32:43) does not relate to inheriting the World to Come, because we have already been taught (Sanhedrin 90a) that “All of Israel have a share in the World to Come,” not only those who perform these particular acts. It refers to how one can live a “World to Come” existence in this world. The Jew who lives in the holy land blessed by Hashem, pledgest his allegiance to Him morning and evening, and speaks in the language with which Hashem created His world and wrote His Torah, is experiencing something of the intimacy with Hashem which the World to Come is all about. He is like a citizen of that infinite world who is on a temporary visit in this finite one.
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 Bnei Ches 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, Besuel, 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?

BONUS QUESTION?

Rashi states that the “gift” that Avraham gave his children from Ketura was the knowledge of sorcery and black magic (25:6). The Torah punishes one who engages in witchcraft with the death penalty. So why did Avraham teach them a practice forbidden by the Torah?

I DIDN’T KNOW THAT!

The first section of this week’s Parsha describing the purchase of Sarah’s burial site contains seven references to “burying a dead person.” These refer prophetically to the seven people to be buried there — Avraham & Sarah, Yitzchak & Rivka, Yaakov & Leah — and the wicked Esau, whose head is buried there.

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.
17. 25:5 - The power of blessing.
18. 25:7 - One hundred and seventy five years old.
19. 25:17 - Fourteen years.
20. None!
**Weekly Daf**

**Berachos 51 - 57**

**“Labriyut”**

“Tzum Gezund!” “Labriyut!”

These are the traditional blessings given in Yiddish or Hebrew to one who sneezes. But in Talmudic times the term was “marpei,” which has the same connotation of wishing the sneezer good health.

What if someone sneezes in the Beis Midrash while you are learning Torah? Should you interrupt your study to wish him good health?

In the Beis Midrash of Rabbi Gamliel, we are told, they did not wish the sneezer “marpei,” in order not to interrupt their Torah study. On the basis of this, the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 246:17) rules that we should not interrupt our study in order to offer the blessing of good health.

Is this standard relevant only to previous generations who never lifted their heads out of their holy books to say anything unrelated to Torah, or is it also applicable in our times when we interrupt our learning for other matters as well? The position of the Prisha is that since today we interrupt our studies for other matters we may also do so to wish the sneezer well.

The Turei Zahav, however, takes issue with this approach. He cites what he assumes is the basis for this distinction between eras. Back in the second perek (16a) we learned that a chassan is exempt from the recital of the Shma on his wedding night because his mental preoccupation with the consummation of his marriage prevents him from maintaining the proper concentration required for this mitzvah. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 70:3), however, rules that this exemption for the chassan no longer applies, since no one really concentrates so intently when reciting the Shma in our times.

If this halachic precedent is indeed the basis for the approach of the Prisha, it is a highly questionable extension, argues the Turei Zahav. By reflecting on the low level of concentration which is universal in our day we arrive at the positive result of a chassan also reciting the Shma. But what right, he asks, do we have to utilize our lower level of Torah study to sanction an interruption for blessing the sneezer, which will have the negative effect of encouraging people in the Beis Midrash to interrupt their study for all sorts of idle discussion?

Despite this challenge the Aruch Hashulchan (246:33) cites only the lenient opinion of the Prisha.

**Thanks and Praise**

One who was exposed to a situation of peril — the four prototypes cited in the Gemara are travel over oceans or deserts, illness and imprisonment — must make the blessing of “Hagomel” when he survives that threat to his life. The blessing must be made in the presence of a minyan of Jews (the custom is to do so in the synagogue after the reading of the Torah) and there should preferably be at least two Torah scholars among them.

This is all derived from the passage in Tehillim (107:32) which directs those who have survived danger to “exalt Him in the council of sages.”

The blessing of exaltation before a minyan is an expression of thanks to Heaven for being saved. But when a survivor of any threat to his life expresses gratitude his initial attitude to the experience he has just endured is that he would have preferred to have been spared both the danger and the deliverance.

This, however, is an improper perspective. Every experience in life is an education in appreciating the ways of Divine Providence. When a survivor reflects more profoundly on his experience he is not only grateful to Hashem for the deliverance but also sings the praises of Hashem for lifting him to a higher spiritual level through this experience.

This more mature approach is certainly fostered by the presence of a pair of Torah scholars whose deeper understanding of Hashem’s ways inspires praise in addition to thanks.

**Parsha Insights**

In his prayer that he should select the correct wife for Yitzchak, Eliezer chose to rely on the prospective spouse showing only one character trait — kindness.

How could Eliezer rely on kindness alone? Surely a wife to be fit for Yitzchak would also need to be outstanding in other areas of character perfection. For example, purity of heart, faith and fear of Hashem.

In the Ethics of the Fathers, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai then says to his disciples, “Go out and see which is the good way to which a man should cling.”

Rabbi Eliezer says “A good eye.” Rabbi Yehoshua says “A good friend.” Rabbi Yossi says “A good neighbor.” Rabbi Shimon says “One who foresees the results of an action.” Rabbi Elazar says “A good heart.”

Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai then says to them, “I prefer the words of Elazar ben Arach to your words, because your words are included in his words.” A good heart includes all other good characteristics.

Avraham Avinu was the first of the Avos. As he was the father of Yitzchak and the grandfather of Yaakov, he “contained” the other two patriarchs. Avraham’s most outstanding quality was chesed, kindness. Kindness contains the other qualities.

**Sources:**

- The Eyes Of Truth - Chiddushei Hakerov
- Who’s Sorry Now? - HaDraash Y’HaYyun,
- Rabbi Shalom Schwadron, Rabbi Pesach Krohn
- A Good Heart - Avos 2:9, Rabbi M. Robman in Zicherin Meir, Lekach Tov

**A Good Heart**

“A good heart includes all other good characteristics.”

Avraham Avinu was the first of the Avos. As he was the father of Yitzchak and the grandfather of Yaakov, he “contained” the other two patriarchs. Avraham’s most outstanding quality was chesed, kindness. Kindness contains the other qualities.

Let it be that the maiden to whom I shall say ‘Tilt your pitcher so I may drink,’ and who replies ‘Drink and I will even water your camels,’ her will You have designated for Your servant Yitzchak.” (24:14)

**Parsha Insights**

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- A Good Heart - Avos 2:9, Rabbi M. Robman in Zicherin Meir, Lekach Tov
Hungry for Torah

David <haneve@hotmail.com> wrote:

I’m 37 with no real Jewish education. Sometimes I feel overwhelmed with the idea of studying Torah, yet at this time of life I have a real hunger for it. I haven’t started a family yet; I don’t want them to inherit the spiritual void that I did. Any ideas?

Dear David,

A friend of mine from Yeshiva, when his wife was expecting their first, broke the news to me by saying: “I’ve got eight years now to study Bava Metzia!” (Bava Metzia is traditionally the first tractate boys begin when they start studying Talmud at age eight.) We all feel a bit lacking when it comes to our children’s Torah education.

I support your desire to start studying. It is basically the only real cure for assimilation and intermarriage in the Jewish community at large, and in our own future generations in particular. There’s no time like now to begin.

The best thing is if you can give a block of time — it doesn’t have to be too long — but enough so that you can make a real foundation which you can build upon. A year of study would be great, but even a few weeks can build upon. A year of study can make a real foundation which you too long — but enough so that you block of time — it doesn’t have to be large, and in our own future generations in particular.

Dear David,

I don’t think you have to worry about your children “inheriting a spiritual void.” Regardless of your own level of actual knowledge, you can raise your children in a solid Jewish community and send them to a good Jewish school. Then, all they need to inherit from you is your “hunger” for spirituality! (By the way, who did you inherit your spiritual hunger from? Could it be that your parents deserve a little credit?)

Dad of David

Rachel Fyman
<DaleFyman@easyinternet.net> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

What did Yishai do that gave him the merit to be mentioned always as the father of David, as opposed to, for example, Amram who is rarely mentioned as the father of Moses? Thanks.

Dear Rachel Fyman,

Often the Tanach refers to David as “David son of Yishai” whereas the Torah never refers to Moses as “Moses son of Amram.” I think the reason is that David’s lineage is of paramount importance. Since David is the founder of the monarchy and the messianic dynasty, the Torah emphasizes that he is a descendant of Yishai who was from the royal tribe of Judah.

Moses, on the other hand, founded the “Torah Dynasty.” Through diligence and determination, anyone in the world regardless of lineage can become a Torah scholar. Therefore the Torah de-emphasizes Moses’s lineage.

Interestingly, the Torah always refers to Elazar and Ithamar as “the sons of Aharon.” Here too, their lineage is emphasized because they owe their positions to their father, Aharon, who was the High Priest.

Shabbat in the Fast Lane

Rabbi Mordechai J. Gold from Indianapolis, Indiana <mjgold1@juno.com> wrote:

I am a Mashgiach in a mid-western city. I am involved with very secular Jews. I would like to have guests for Shabbat, but the problem is that there is the definite chance for Shabbat [desecration of Shabbat] like driving their car to my home! Am I allowed to have them over to my home for the Shabbat meal?

Dear Rabbi Gold,

As you know, it’s forbidden to cause a fellow Jew to transgress the Torah. This is true regardless of that person’s level of observance or affiliation. But what if your intention is to show the other person the beauty of Torah observance?

Your question was asked to a
renowned halachic authority in Jerusalem. He said that if you have a proven talent for reaching out to non-observant people then you can invite them for Shabbat, but the invitation must include the option to stay within walking distance for the entire Shabbat. Even if you’re sure they’ll chose to drive, you’ve done your part by sincerely offering to accommodate them.

**YIDDEL RIDDLE**

_Last week we asked:_

How is water from the sea like atonement like a cow? (Say these clues in Hebrew And then you’ll know just how!)

How’s an onion in the shade like three that he kneaded? (These clues, too, are much clearer, When in Hebrew they’re repeated.)

_Answer:_

In Hebrew, these are all homographs — that is, they are pairs of words that are spelled the same but pronounced differently.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Water / From the sea</th>
<th>= Mayim / Miyam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atonement / Like a cow</td>
<td>= Kapara / K’para</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An onion / In the shade</td>
<td>= Batzel / Batzel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three / That he kneaded</td>
<td>= Shalosh / Shelash</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Hebrew, these pairs of words are all spelled exactly the same!

• Riddle thanks to Kol Simcha Friday Morning English Radio

**NEW FEATURE!**

**PUBLIC DOMAIN**

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous “Ask-the-Rabbi” features.

This is a problem I’ve faced more than once! Is something “parev” or “REALLY parev” (i.e., not cooked in a fleishig or milchig pot). I think that the response should have made clear that the potatoes cooked in a fleishig pot can’t be eaten at the same time as something milchig (or vice versa). It’s implied from the second sentence in your answer, but not really clear to someone who didn’t know about the issue. Kol Tuv.

• Jeremy Rose, Albans, UK <jeremy@comsys.co.uk>

Please correct me if I’m wrong, but when you wrote “If you eat food that is parve — neither milk nor meat — which was cooked using clean “meat” utensils, you don’t need to wait six hours before eating milk foods.” Shouldn’t it be made clear that although this is permitted, they may NOT be eaten together (in the same meal) with dairy foods?

• Rachi & Devorah Messing, Baltimore, MD <rachim@juno.com>

The Rabbi replies: Food cooked in a clean milchig or fleishig pot that had not been used for 24 hours may be eaten together with either milk or meat. (Initially, one shouldn’t cook food in such a pot intending to eat it with the opposite kind of food.) If, on the other hand, the food was cooked in a pot that had been used within 24 hours for milk or meat, the Beit Yosef permits eating the food together with the opposite kind of food whereas the Remah forbids this. The Sephardic custom generally follows the Beit Yosef while the Ashkenazic custom generally follows the Remah.

Some other suggestions to answer your riddle about the people in the Torah whose names spelled backwards describe them:

• Puah / Ha’of — Puah cooed to the babies and took care of them like birds and B’nei Yisrael are compared to birds.

• Lavan / Naval — Lavan was a low person, a “naval.”

• Mamaleh@aol.com

**BONUS ANSWER!**

Avraham didn’t teach them sorcery with the intention that they practice it. He wanted to give them expertise in such matters so that they could overcome others who tried to use wizardry against them.

• Gur Aryeh

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**RECOMMENDED READING LIST**

**RAMBAN**

22:9 The Cave of Machpela
24:1 Blessed in all Things
24:64 Rivka’s Modesty
25:8 Full of Years

**SFORNO**

24:14 Prayer or Divination
24:65 The Awe of Yitzchak
25:8 Avraham’s Death