

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT CHAYEI SARA · 25 CHESHVAN 5773 - NOV. 10, 2012 · VOL. 20 NO. 5

PARSHA INSIGHTS

SUPERHERO

"And I will have you swear..." (24:3)

In a more modest world, mild-mannered Clark Kent would discreetly slip into a phone booth, tear off his shirt and reveal his true identity as Superman.

If truth be known, we can all be Superman.

Within us exist tremendous untapped powers. There are well-documented cases of mothers lifting cars to save the lives of their children, or running at superwoman speeds to rescue their offspring from wild animals. Ostensibly, these were ordinary folk, suddenly possessed of superhuman strength. G-d has put inside us enormous powers but most of the time we do not, or cannot, access them. Why?

In this week's Torah portion, Avraham makes his servant Eliezer swear not to take a wife for Yitzchak from the Canaanites: *"Rather, to my land and to my kindred shall you go and take a wife for my son..."*

If Avraham doubted Eliezer's loyalty, why send him in the first place? And if Eliezer's loyalty was beyond question,

what was the need for an oath?

Avraham realized that it might not be easy to find a wife for Yitzchak. He made Eliezer swear so that if the going got tough, Eliezer would reach down into hidden reservoirs of persistence and continue the search.

Nothing substitutes for the will to succeed. Our mindset is very often our greatest enemy. Lack of self-esteem and/or self-confidence limits our ability to take wing and fulfill our potential.

A Jew is supposed to say to himself every day, "When will my actions reach the actions of my fathers Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov?" When we compare ourselves to these giants we are reminding ourselves of the spiritual legacy locked inside us, which would, if we would only let it, send us looking for the nearest telephone booth to reveal our superman costume to the world.

• Source: Based on the Shem MiShmuel

The Ohr Somayach Family mourns the loss of our dear friend

MR. ROBERT KAPLAN, OBM

ר' ירחמיאל בן ר' בצלאל ז"ל

and extends heartfelt condolences to his son

YAAKOV KAPLAN & FAMILY

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Sarah, 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.

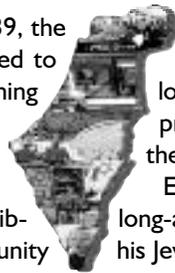
LOVE OF THE LAND

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

THE DAY THE RAINS CAME

When a drought plagued Eretz Yisrael in 1639, the ruler of Jerusalem, Mohammed Pasha, tried to placate his discontented subjects by blaming the Jews for the problem. Blaming the Jews for plotting the drought, he issued an ultimatum that they must produce rain within three days or face exile.

Unsuccessful in their attempts at begging and bribing this unreasonable ruler, the leaders of the community



asked and received permission to pray at the Tomb of Zechariah at the foot of the Mount of Olives. All day long the revered tomb of the Prophet was the scene of prayer fervently offered by men, women and children. In the late afternoon clouds appeared and rain began to fall.

Even the Pasha himself was forced to concede that the long-awaited rain was a Heavenly response to the prayers of his Jewish subjects.

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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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Based on the Talmudic Sages found in the seven pages of the Talmud studied each week in the Daf Yomi cycle

SHABBAT 37 - 43

“To prevent one from transgressing it is permissible to quote Torah anywhere.”

This was the explanation provided by the *gemara* for the action of Rebbie (Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi) in issuing a halachic ruling on Shabbat to Rabbi Yitzchak bar Avdimi in a public bathhouse. A question had been raised as to how Rebbie could do this when we know that it is forbidden to even think words of Torah in such an undignified place. After rejecting the possibility that the ruling was said in a foreign language, since this too is forbidden in such a place, the *gemara* concludes that even in such a place Torah may be said even in Hebrew if the purpose is to prevent another Jew from transgressing.

• *Shabbat 40b*

“If one eats a meal and fails to walk four amot (cubits) the food he ate will not be properly digested.”

This piece of medical advice was applied in the case of a debtor whose property and even his furniture were confiscated by the court. He was left, however, with one bed and a mattress and with a second bed. In response to the question why there was a need for two beds, the *gemara* (*Bava Metzia 113b*) explains that one was to eat upon and the other for sleeping. Why could he not eat upon the same bed in which he slept, asks the *gemara*? The answer given is that he would not have the need to walk the distance from one bed to another, and thus lose the benefit of walking to help digestion.

• *Shabbat 41a*

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OPPOSING HELPMATE

From: Anonymous

*Dear Rabbi,
My wife and I both studied in ba'al teshuva institutions. We both learned that as a married couple, the husband should be responsible for making Torah-related decisions and the wife should be responsible for making decisions pertaining to the household, which are no less important. However, my wife keeps questioning whether what I say is right, and constantly wants me to ask a Rabbi. I feel that I don't infringe on her sphere, and she shouldn't infringe on mine. So I insist that she accept my opinion on these matters, which I think she should respect. Could you please help me explain this to her?*

Dear Anonymous,

This question should really be directed to, and answered by, a rabbi who knows you both, knows your situation, and whose opinion is also accepted by you both. So I can only address it in a general way which I hope will be helpful not only for you, but for others as well.

The fact that you are asking this question to a rabbi is a good thing – it shows that despite your reluctance to consider your wife's position, you're at least asking what troubles you. That should enlighten you as to her need to feel a rabbi is consulted regarding what troubles her.

You see, what you write that you both learned in your respective institutions is only generally and partially correct.

First, marriage is a joint venture in which all decisions

affect both people and therefore neither has a monopoly over any sphere. Rather, they are to work in unison such that the specialization of each does not preclude his or her involvement in the sphere of the other.

Second, it's not that each is necessarily responsible for making the decisions in the relevant sphere, but rather responsible that correct decisions be made. As in all areas, this often entails consulting an expert.

What gives the husband more of a say in the "Torah sphere" is that men have more of a requirement to study Torah, and therefore generally have more familiarity with it. And since women are generally more knowledgeable and experienced in matters relating to running a household, they are given more of a say in that sphere. Accordingly, neither one's say is arbitrary, but based on an assumption of knowledge. But if either questions the opinion of the other, he or she is certainly entitled to consult an expert.

In the case of a husband whose opinion in Torah-related matters is being questioned by his wife, he or they should consult their rabbi. The husband should not feel offended or threatened, but rather be willing to ask what the Torah says. Either way, it's to his advantage. If what he said was correct, he gains respect from his wife. If it was not, the fact that he was sensitive to his wife's concerns and humbly sought Torah guidance is also appreciated and respected by his wife.

Of course, if a wife is constantly, unjustifiably questioning her husband, or, alternatively, rightly questioning but in a demeaning manner, she has to work on improving herself, and that's a different discussion. But in most cases, her "opposition" should not be viewed as harmful, but rather as a fulfillment of the verse referring to one's wife as a "helpmate opposite him".

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WHO GETS THE GOLD?

Question: At the peak of their long and warm friendship Reuven took an oath to give Shimon as a present a plot of land that he owned, and even made a *kinyan* to transfer the ownership according to the halacha. Their friendship soured, however, before Shimon actually took possession. Reuven realized that he had no way of backing out of his commitment but he did make plans to bring hundreds of workers to remove, under cover of darkness, the gold nuggets which were piled on that plot so that Shimon would be left with only the land. Was this the right thing to do?

Answer:

Such a case actually happened between two friends in Bochara half a century ago. When consulted on this matter, Rabbi Dov Ber Wiedenfeld, the rav of Tshebein who spent his last years in Jerusalem, ruled that the treasure belonged to Shimon. As proof he cited a point made by Ramban in his com-

mentary on the Torah.

When a Jew made his declaration about fulfilling his obligations regarding tithing his produce, he concluded with an appeal to G-d to look mercifully upon His people and the "land which You gave us in fulfillment of Your oath to our ancestors to give them a land flowing with milk and honey" (*Devarim 26:15*). In G-d's oath, comments Ramban, we find only that He committed himself to giving them the land. No mention is made of its flowing with milk and honey. The conclusion then is that since Eretz Yisrael was indeed flowing with milk and honey when the oath was made, it is considered as if these ingredients were included in the commitment. In similar fashion, since the gold treasure was on the plot of land when Reuven transferred ownership to Shimon, Reuven has no right to remove the gold which is considered part and parcel of the land which was gifted.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

A GREAT TEACHER

“**T**he mediocre teacher tells, the good teacher explains, and the superior teacher demonstrates.”

This grading of teachers made by William Arthur Ward came to mind upon hearing what Rabbi Dovid Weinberger did for his class of senior citizens at Jerusalem's Ohr Somayach while studying the Torah law forbidding the consumption of animal fat known as *cheilev*. In all of his many years as an educator, Rabbi Weinberger never had such a group of students who insisted on being shown exactly which is the forbidden fat and which the permitted one.

What did Rabbi Weinberger? In the presence of the stu-

dents, he got on the phone to the renowned Jerusalem butcher, R. Alter Hacker, and began asking him how to answer his student's questions. "Send one of them over to me right away," came the answer. In less than a quarter of an hour one of the older men came into the classroom clutching genuine *cheilev* in one hand, and the permitted *shuman* in the other.

Thus Rabbi Weinberger, who serves as the Ohr Somayach Student Registrar in addition to his teaching role, proved himself a superior teacher by demonstrating what he taught, and a truly great teacher by inspiring his students and his colleagues with a love for learning and teaching.

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Geshem or Gashem?

BY RABBI YEHUDA SPITZ

Recently, on Shmini Atzeret, as per the Mishna's instruction and codified by the Shulchan Aruch, world Jewry started reciting "Gevurot Geshamim B'Tchiyat HaMeitim", better known as the formulaic insert "Mashiv HaRuach U'Morid HaGashem", in the second bracha of *Shmoneh Esrei*. This addition, showcasing the might of G-d by mentioning the fact that He is the only One who has the power and ability to make rain, is considered so imperative that one who forgets to insert it must repeat the whole *Shmoneh Esrei*.

As there are no vowels in the Gemara or Shulchan Aruch, an interesting question arises: What is the proper way to pronounce the Hebrew word for rain in this sentence? Is it *Geshem* (with a *segol* under the letter *Gimmel*) or is it *Gashem* (with a *kamatz* under the letter *Gimmel*)? Although the word for rain is pronounced *Geshem* when saying the word by itself, still, its proper pronunciation might be changed when part of a sentence.

Contemporary *halachic* authorities used various rules of Hebrew grammar (*dikduk*) to come up with the proper solution.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein quotes a rule cited by several *Rishonim*, including Tosafot, the Ran and the Rosh, that any word before a pause (*etnachta*) or period (*sof pasuk*) becomes vowelized with a *kametz* (*uh* sound), instead of a *segol* (*eh* sound). The example given is the word "ere^htz", that when it is the last word in a sentence or right before a pause, changes to "a^hretz". This, Rabbi Feinstein reasons, is the very same thing that happens to the word *Geshem* in this formula, that since it is the end of the sentence, the proper reading is "Mashiv HaRuach U'Morid HaG^hashem".

Several other authorities, including the Vilna Gaon, the Netziv, the Chafetz Chaim, Rabbi Aharon Kotler, the Sha'arim Metzuyanim B'Halacha, and Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, agree with Rabbi Feinstein's reasoning and hold that the proper pronunciation is "G^hashem". This is also how it's presented in the *siddur* of the Arizal.

On the other hand, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky is of the opinion that since this part of *Shmoneh Esrei* is called "Gevuro^t", meaning strengths of G-d (plural), then the mentioning of the rain should not be considered the end of that sentence, but rather the beginning of the list of various

strengths (making rain fall, sustaining life etc.), especially as the falling of rain and sustaining of life are interrelated, as they are both referring to providing *parnassah* livelihood. Therefore, he posits that the proper reading here is "Mashiv HaRuach U'Morid HaG^hashem", with the word "Geshem" maintaining its usual form. He adds that this pronunciation is found generations earlier, in the *siddurim* of the Shulchan Aruch HaRav, and the VaYaas Avraham of Tchechnov. This is also the way it is presented in the *siddur* of Rabbi Yaakov Emden, known for its exacting *dikduk*.

Although they do not expound on the reasoning behind their practice, several other contemporary authorities, including the Levushei Mordechai, the Steipler Gaon, Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, the Minchat Yitzchak, and Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch rule this way as well, that the correct pronunciation is "Mashiv HaRuach U'Morid HaG^hashem".

This 'dikduk debate', over which rule of grammar applies here, is a universal one, which explains why one who walks into almost any *shul* in the world will find that there is no set rule; one *chazzan* might say *Geshem* and another might say *Gashem*. And even though there are *shuls* that follow the ruling of one set of *poskim* relating to this issue, another *shul* will follow the ruling of the others.

Practically speaking, if one's *minhag* is to say "G^hashem", then one should ensure to immediately pause after saying it; ergo, the converse is true as well. If one's *minhag* is to say "Geshem", then one should not pause after it, but rather should read it as part and parcel of the next line, "Mechalkel Chaim".

So, whichever *minhag* one's synagogue follows, at least he may finally gain an appreciation for all those Hebrew Grammar lessons in elementary school.

Postscript: This is just one of a number of places where *dikduk* decides the proper reading of *tefillot* prayers. Although many *Gedolim* through the ages spoke about *dikduk*'s importance, unfortunately its study at present is much neglected. In the words of Rabbi Yisroel Reisman in his excellent recent book, *Pathways of the Prophets*: "The myth of the lack of importance of (at least) a minimal amount of knowledge of *dikduk* must be dispelled. This is an area where a small amount of time and effort go a long way. Let's do it!"