

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT CHAYEI SARA · 25 CHESHVAN 5776 - NOV. 7, 2015 · VOL. 23 NO. 5

PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE SOURCE OF THE SOUL

“And Sara died in Kiryat Arba — that is Chevron ...” (23:2)

The eyes of the world focus on a small hill in the center of the city of Jerusalem. It measures about one-eighth of a one square kilometer.

Lives are forfeited for its soil. Nowhere else in the entire world does such a tiny patch of land provoke so much strife and bloodshed.

Why?

Because this is the place where Heaven and Earth kiss.

This is the place from which G-d started His creation. This is the place where Avraham was prepared to sacrifice his son Yitzchak; the place where Yaakov saw the connection of Heaven to Earth in a ladder stretching skywards; the place where our two Holy Temples stood and where we believe the third and final one will be built at the proper time.

Even though the nations of the world may not understand all this, they instinctively sense its importance and uniqueness and they want it to control it for themselves.

In addition to this place, there is another place where this world also touches the world beyond, and it too is a site of contention and bloodshed.

It’s called Chevron.

The word *Chevron* comes from the root meaning “to connect” — *l’chaber*. The souls of all who are buried there connect Above in the City of G-d known as “The Four Camps of the Divine Presence.”

Not for naught is the desire of the righteous to be buried there, for from Chevron their souls merit to connect to their spiritual source.

That’s the meaning of this verse, “*Kiryat Arba* — literally “the City of the Four (Camps of the Divine Presence)” — *that is Chevron*, the “connector” of the soul to its ultimate source.

• Source: *Rabbeinu Bachaye*

PLEASE JOIN US...

...in saying Tehillim/Psalms and a special prayer to G-d for the safety and security of all of Klal Yisrael in these times of conflict and conclude with the following special prayer:

אחינו כל בית ישראל
“Our brothers, the entire family of Israel, who are delivered into distress and captivity, whether they are on sea or dry land — may G-d have mercy on them and remove them from stress to relief, from darkness to light, from subjugation to redemption now, speedily and soon.”

SOTA 16 - 22

Ravina said, "Although women are not commanded in Torah study, however, when they take their children to Torah schools and they wait for their husbands to return from the Yeshiva, don't they share in the reward with them?"

In this manner Ravina explains on our *daf* what merit could save a Sotah from being punished immediately; rather this merit could protect her for three years before punishment if she is guilty. Rashi comments that the wife deserves special merit for waiting for her husband to return from learning Torah "in another city". Why does Rashi add this detail which is not mentioned in the *gemara*? Answer: If her husband is learning in his "home town" then what is so special about her waiting for him? She goes about her business during the day and then is joined by him at home when he concludes his day of Torah study. Nothing too special about that. However, if she is willing to sacrifice his returning home at night in order that he may learn Torah temporarily out of town in a Yeshiva that is preferable for him, then she is certainly a "woman of valor" and deserving of sharing in the rewards of his Torah study.

• Sotah 21a

Ulah said, "Not like Shimon the brother of Azaria and not like Rabbi Yochanan of the household of the Nasi, rather like Hillel and Shachna."

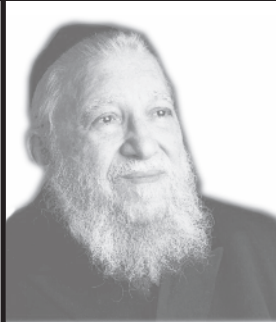
What was special and different about Hillel and Shachna? The *gemara* explains that when Rav Dimi came (from Bavel to Eretz Yisrael) he said, "Hillel and Shachna were brothers; Hillel learned Torah (in poverty — Rashi) while his brother Shachna ran a business. After the Sage Hillel learned much Torah, his brother Shachna offered him financial support on condition that they share the reward of Hillel's Torah study. A Heavenly voice announced, "If a person will give all of his financial wealth for Torah, he will be ashamed and disgraced" (Shir Hashirim 8:7).

Although Shachna desired the reward for Torah, he did not offer to support his greatly impoverished brother Hillel during all the time of his Torah study in dire poverty. Only after Hillel became a renowned Torah scholar did Shachna want to buy his Torah, like buying a new car or a new house. This was disgraceful said the Heavenly voice. The honorable way to use one's wealth and receive reward for Torah study was like that of the other Sages named by Ulah — they were supported by a brother or by a Nasi from the onset to enable them to learn Torah, and therefore the brother and the Nasi were truly part of them and the Sages' names reflected the praiseworthy supporters.

The Maharsha adds that the *gemara* asks why the verse repeats the word for "ashamed" — "*boz yavuzu*" — and not just state it once — "*yavuzu*", they will shame him. He explains that the *gemara* answers that a person who thinks and acts like Shachna did is doubly shameful. Both in this world and in the next. In this world he does not deserve the honor of his name being associated with the name of his Torah scholar brother Hillel, and in the next world he suffers the shame of a lack of merit and reward for Torah study.

• Sotah 21a

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Rav Bulman *zt"l*
on the
Torah Portion of the Week

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Name the four couples buried in *Kiryat Arba*.
2. What did Sara 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 Sara, 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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Abarbanel

ON THE PARSHA

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

Chayei Sara

At the end of this Parsha, Avraham takes another wife named Keturah who bears him six additional sons. Rashi explains that she was actually Hagar, whom he was essentially remarrying after having sent her away years before. According to Abarbanel it was understandable for him to remarry her after the death of Sara. Abarbanel is puzzled, however, by the fact that the Torah tells us explicitly that there were children from his concubines (plural), to whom he gave gifts. This is a clear indication that Hagar and Keturah were not the same person. What need did Avraham have for an additional wife besides Hagar?

Abarbanel provides six different reasons for Avraham's actions. Firstly, G-d had already told Avraham, "You shall be the father of a multitude of nations." (Bereishet 17:4) The six sons of Keturah and their progeny would end up in different places and represent the fulfillment of that promise. Secondly, having more children was a demonstration that undergoing *brit mila* did not diminish his ability to father more children. Thirdly, this was a way to prevent Yishmael from having any claim to an inheritance from Avraham. When Yishmael sees that Avraham sends away the sons of Keturah with gifts, rather than receiving an inheritance, he understands that he is, at best, on a par with them. Their mother Keturah has a higher status than his mother Hagar, as Hagar was merely Sara's maidservant while Keturah is closer to a full wife in her own right. Still, they are sent away with only gifts, not a full inheritance.

Fourthly, taking Keturah as a wife demonstrates the difference between the nature of his marriage to Sara and this second marriage to Keturah. He was careful for both himself and Yitzchak to choose a wife from his own family in order to fulfill the covenant with G-d. Keturah was either a

Canaanite, a Philistine or an Egyptian. With Yitzchak, however, Avraham was adamant that Eliezer his servant not find him a wife from the neighboring Canaanites, but only from Avraham's family. His marriage to Keturah, on the other hand, was for himself. He knew that the future of the Jewish nation did not depend on her progeny. Fifthly, starting a new family in his old age and then sending them away without an inheritance provided reassurance to Yitzchak that he was Avraham's sole heir. Normally, children born to a man in his old age have a special place in man's heart, all the more so when the mother of the first sons has passed away. Yitzchak now has an ironclad guarantee that the nation will continue its development solely through him. Finally, Avraham was also trying to minimize the possibility of any further friction between Yitzchak and Yishmael. There is no question that Yishmael still harbored hatred for Yitzchak, since it was on account of Yitzchak that Yishmael was banished and supplanted as Avraham's inheritor. By having more sons who would be sent away with gifts only, Avraham was demonstrating to Yishmael that Yitzchak's favored status was not due to Sara; rather it was due to a prophecy that came directly from G-d. The Torah makes it clear that Avraham sent the children of the concubines away with gifts, with no mention of Yishmael being sent away also, even though Avraham must have given him gifts as well. Therefore, Yitzchak and Yishmael remained together in a brotherly relationship. Avraham dies at a good old age, mature and content, seeing Yishmael and Yitzchak reunited peacefully. They bury him together, only the two of them, with no mention of the sons of Keturah.

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

THE CAVE AND ITS OWNERS

The first of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs to be buried in the Cave of Machpela was Sara, about whose death and burial we read in this week's Torah portion.



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

IT'S A GIRL!

From: Sara

Dear Rabbi,
Thank G-d, my husband and I are expecting our first child. I don't mind if it's a boy or a girl, but I have a feeling that my husband wants a boy, and so too with our families. Is there any basis in Judaism for this preference? I'll be happy with whatever G-d gives, but I'd like to know where I stand.

Dear Sara,

First, accept my blessing that you and the baby should be healthy and that you give birth at a propitious time, accompanied by joy for yourself, your husband and your families.

From a Torah point of view, giving birth to boys and girls is equally important. Without the one you can't have the other!

Furthermore, the miraculous process of conception, pregnancy, birth and the emergence of a new life is so overwhelmingly amazing that any such considerations pale in comparison to what G-d is performing.

If people nevertheless have a preference for boys, one reason may be "to carry on the family name". But from a Jewish perspective, this is really insignificant. For most of Jewish history people didn't even have family names. Anyway, the continuation of a *name* is not particularly important; rather the continuation of *Torah* is — whether via sons or daughters.

Religious preference for boys might be based on the

opportunity to fulfill the male-specific *mitzvot* of *pidyon haben* (redeeming of the first-born) or *brit mila* (ritual circumcision). But in the case of the former, there are many instances where for technical reasons the firstborns do not require *pidyon* anyway. In the case of the latter, the *mitzvah* of *mila* pertaining to a boy is offset by the fact that one does not fulfill the *mitzvah* of *pru u'rvu* (being fruitful and multiplying) without having a girl.

The author of Me'am Loez has a section which is very pertinent to your question and is worth quoting. On Genesis 6:1, "Now it happened that when man began to increase on the face of the earth, daughters were born to them", he writes:

"The Torah teaches us here that a man should not feel bad when he has a daughter. In many places there was an idiosyncratic notion that a man must feel somehow ashamed when his wife gives birth to a daughter. Such an attitude is completely wrong.

The Midrash relates that when Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel had a daughter, Rabbi Chiya visited him and said, 'G-d is now beginning to bless you'. The reason is that the family is increased through daughters. This is alluded to in the verse here, 'Now it happened when man began to increase on the face of the earth, daughters were born to them' (i.e., the Torah signifies blessing by the birth of daughters).

Additionally, the Torah here emphasizes 'that man began to increase *on the face of the earth*'. This alludes to the fact that the birth of a daughter brings a blessing not only to her birthplace, but to the entire 'face of the earth'."

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.

SHEMONEH ESREI: EIGHTEENTH BLESSING

In the “*Modim*” blessing we offer thanks to G-d for all of the good that He bestows upon us. As such, it is fitting to pause for a moment before reciting this blessing in order to awaken a feeling of genuine gratitude within one’s heart.

“We give thanks (*modim*) to You...”

Rabbi Hutner explains that the root word for thanks in Hebrew can also mean to agree or admit. Accordingly, one can explain that in order to truly thank G-d one must first agree that all that G-d does is for the good. Once one is “*modeh*”, i.e. admits in his heart that everything given to him by G-d is in reality good, he can then thank G-d properly.

We find an example of the above idea in the Talmud. Rabbi Akiva was once travelling. Unsuccessful in finding lodging in town, he was forced to spend the night in the forest alone. Instead of seeing his situation as negative, he proclaimed, “All that the Merciful One does is for the good. That night his donkey and rooster were killed and his only candle was blown out by the wind. Nevertheless, he still persisted in his belief that whatever G-d does is only for the good, thus accepting his dismal situation. That very night, marauding soldiers attacked the city, captured its inhabitants, and took them all as slaves. Rabbi Akiva proclaimed to his students,

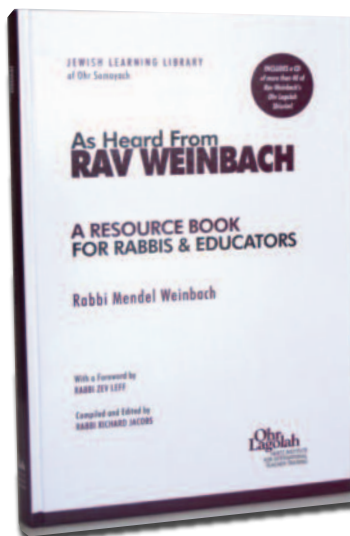
“Did I not tell you? All that G-d does is for the good! Had the candle remained lit, the soldiers would have seen me; had the donkey brayed or had the rooster crowed, the soldiers would have heard and come and captured me!”

Despite how things appeared, Rabbi Akiva saw everything he encountered as an expression of Divine mercy, and through his great faith in G-d he was miraculously saved from danger.

“We shall give thanks to You...”

for Your miracles that are with us every day.”

This refers to the constant “hidden miracles” that G-d does for us morning, afternoon and night. In fact the Talmud relates a story regarding the verse that states, “I thank You, G-d, because You were angry with me.” (Isaiah 12:1) Two people embarked on a trip. One became injured and could not journey on. He began to hurl imprecations and curses regarding his lost opportunity. Shortly afterwards he heard that the boat he was to sail on sank in the middle of the ocean, whereupon he began to thank and praise G-d for saving him. Though we do not see it with our eyes, we too are the recipients of countless miracles.



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AKIVA KENNEDY

Age: 35 - Windsor, Nova Scotia, Canada
University of Toronto, Honors BA Philosophy
University of Alberta, MA Philosophy

When he was a baby, Akiva's family moved from Ottawa, Canada's capital and his mother's home town, to Windsor, Nova Scotia (population 2,000), where his father, a Scottish immigrant, had obtained work as a high school English teacher in an elite private high school. A bright student, Akiva studied at the University of Toronto where he received an Honors degree in Philosophy, and then continued for his MA in Philosophy at the University of Alberta. Most people who convert to Judaism do so because of either an historical familial connection to Jews, or because they met Jews and were influenced by their warmth and culture. Until he was in university the thought of becoming Jewish never entered his mind, and the warm and vibrant Jewish community of Toronto was unknown to him. Akiva's search was like that of his "adopted father" — Avraham Avinu — purely philosophical.

In his second year of studying the philosophy of religion he took a course on the philosophical work "The Star of Redemption" by Franz Rosenzweig, a famous German philosopher and *ba'al teshuva*, which was published in 1921. That course and book so inspired Akiva that he desired to learn more about Rosensweig's religion. There were a number of Jewish professors in the



department and Akiva sought them out to study philosophy and theology with them. Through them he was introduced to the Toronto Jewish Community, which was extremely welcoming. By his final last year at the university he wanted to convert. Akiva had also decided to pursue an academic career in the Philosophy of Religion, but to receive his PhD he needed to learn German since his academic interest was in Rosensweig's teacher, Professor Hermann Cohen, a neo-Kantian, few of whose works had been translated into English. Akiva spent four and a half years in Berlin learning and then perfecting his written and spoken German. He then applied to the University of Toronto's PhD program in Religion and was accepted by the department to study with the professor whom he wanted as his supervisor, Professor David Novak, an Orthodox Jew. Akiva's conversion in 2014 was done by the Toronto Beit Din. His Rabbis encouraged him to come to Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem. He enrolled in the

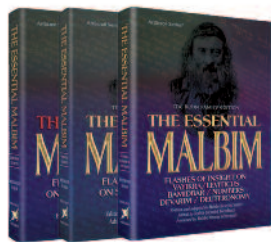
Center Program in Elul of 5775 and is very happy with his choice.

"I've made some good friends here at the Yeshiva. The Rabbis are encouraging. And the teaching approach provides the skill-set that one needs to integrate into the mainstream Orthodox community."

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