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# אשרינו

*A Weinbaum Yeshiva High School Torah Publication*

**PARSHAT CHAYEI SARAH**

~ כ"ב חשון תשע"א ~

**LIONS AND TIGERS AND BE'ERS, OH MY!**

**RABBI MOSHE SCHOCHET**

## WORDS ARE ONLY WORDS

LEORA LITWIN ('12)

Israel is truly remarkable. Almost every news report, political blog, and newspaper article discusses the ongoing conflict and brewing showdown in the Middle East. Such a small, seemingly unimposing country is the talk of the media and accused of creating international impasses.

We find in this week's Torah portion what many interpret to be the historical source of the Jewish nation's claim to *Eretz Yisrael*. Avraham negotiates with Efron in hopes of agreeing to a reasonable price for *Ma'arat HaMachpelah*. The *mefarshim*, knowing that the Torah refrains from superfluous words, attempt to reason why twenty *pasukim* are allotted to the purchase of this land. Many explain that it is necessary to include this story in detail in order to attest to the validity of the Jewish ownership of the land of Israel.

Rabbi Berel Wein provides us with an alterior explication of this transaction. He explains that if one were to only follow the *p'shat* of the *p'sukim* that recount Avraham's experience in Chevron, he or she would notice that the Torah begins by informing the reader that Avraham dwells amongst the residents of Chevron. They deem him a spiritual leader and beseech him to take possession of *Ma'arat Hamachpelah* free of charge. Avraham is not misled by their blandishments and empty promises- he understands that he cannot rely on their offer, for it can ultimately be withdrawn. He therefore takes matters into his own hands and purchases the field in which he sought to bury Sarah. Rabbi Wein elucidates for us that the Torah makes a clear effort to demonstrate the risk of relying on "someone's word." We cannot be gullible enough to count on a person's dependability, especially when we are dealing with the future of *Eretz Yisrael*, or in modern reference, our Jewish State.

In this pivotal time of peace talks – when land and settlements are up for negotiation – we, as active Zionists, cannot take the words of our enemies at face value. It is our role as politically conscious Jews in America, despite our geographical barrier, to advocate our staunch opposition against the forfeiting of the land of Israel to our enemies because, as we learn from Avraham *Avinu*, words can be meaningless and manipulative. The Land of Israel is not a bargaining piece, it is the driving force for our defenses. May all be safe and quiet in *Eretz Yisrael*.

## THE POWER OF KINDNESS

YISRAEL WEISS ('13)

In this week's *parsha*, Avraham's slave, Eliezer, faces the extremely difficult task of finding a wife for Yitzchak. After much thought, Eliezer realizes he must search for a woman who exemplifies kindness, the most highly regarded character trait in Avraham's house.

What makes kindness such an essential trait that it would prove to Eliezer that the person who displays kindness is the proper wife for Yitzchak?

The *Gemara* tells us that the Torah starts with *chesed* and ends with *chesed*. Hashem performs the first act of *chesed* for Adam and Chava by dressing them. The last act of *chesed* in the Torah is Hashem's burying Moshe *Rabbeinu*. The act of burial is always known as *chesed shel emes*- the "true chesed"- since the deceased cannot return the kindness.

Kindness is displayed by Moshe *Rabbeinu* when he shows concern for both the young and old sheep in his herd. This is the trait that results in his being chosen to lead *Bnei Yisrael* out of Egypt. We see that the men who descend from Ammon and Moab are punished severely for refusing to give *Bnei Yisrael* water when they are wandering in the desert. They are forever banned from marrying into our nation.

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However, the question must be asked- why are they punished so harshly? We even let descendants of *Amalek*, the nation who we are obligated to kill, marry into our religion!

The reason is that the men from Ammon and Moab are descendants of Lot, Avraham's cousin, who was saved from the city of Sodom in last week's *parsha*. Despite the fact that Hashem saves the lives of their parents, they treat *Bnei Yisrael* without any kindness when they encounter the Jewish people in the desert. This display of utter selfishness and ingratitude forever separates a Jew from an Ammonite and a Moabite. It's their lack of kindness that creates a permanent and unbreakable barrier.

When Eliezer asks Rivkah to give him water, Eliezer does not know what to expect. When Rivkah not only fulfills his request but also gets water for his ten thirsty camels (no doubt a challenging task), Eliezer knows that she is the person who is meant to marry Yitzchak.

We must recognize the importance of kindness in our lives. Caring and showing kindness for another person are basic requirements for every Jew! One must not live without it!

## FOREVER YOUNG

SHALVA GINSPARG ('11)

Some years are simply better than others. According to Rashi, Sarah *Immeinu* defied that truism since each year of her life was equally good. However, this seems to contradict the simple reading of the text. Sarah grappled with famine, infertility, and abduction by both Pharaoh and Elimelech—how is it possible that her years were equally favorable?

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik offers a beautiful insight. Each stage in life is accompanied by a certain set of strengths and tools. Children are often endowed with idealism, zest, and curiosity. Over time, idealism dampens, zest fades, and curiosity weakens as one acquires wisdom, consistency, and maturity.

Accordingly, the Rav writes, "The child is endowed with a capacity of an all-absorbing faith and trustfulness; youth bursts with zealousness, idealism and optimism; the adult, mellowed with years, has the benefit of accumulated knowledge and dispassionate judgment." (Reflections of the Rav, II pp. 88-89)

Sarah's evolution did not parallel this common phenomenon. She fused the idealism and spirit characteristic of a child with the wisdom of an adult. Each year was as satisfactory as the next because "the goodness of her life was equally distributed. She was at the same time a child in her total faith, youthful in her exuberant enthusiasm and an adult in her maturity and judgment." (ibid)

The *Gemara* in *Bava Kama* notes that Avraham had a distinct currency. He had a coin that bore the image of a young man and woman on one side and the image of an elderly man and woman on the other. According to Rav Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg, the currency symbolizes Avraham's and Sarah's distinct ability to synthesize the best of each stage in life. They unite both sides of the proverbial coin by simultaneously possessing both the energy and passion of youth and the maturity of age.

As young adults, our task is two-fold. In order to emulate Avraham and Sarah, we have to channel our passions and enthusiasm and utilize them maturely and intelligently. However, as we grow older, we must keep these youthful qualities while we become more knowledgeable and responsible. Perhaps then, we too will look back on our years and deem them equally good.

אשה שלי  
SAGIV ZEHAVI ('12)

**TABLE TALK**

HADASSAH TIRSCHWELL ('11)

*"Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebecca the daughter of Bethuel." (Genesis 25:20)*

Sarah, Yitzchak's mother, had to suffer through ninety years of childlessness before finally becoming pregnant and having a son. Sarah and Avraham worked their whole lives to proclaim the importance of monotheism and their son Yitzchak represented the future of the nation that Avraham and Sarah had worked so hard to establish.

It is not hard to imagine that Sarah and Avraham were eager for their only son to get married and begin a family to ensure the continuity of the Jewish nation. Still, it was only after the *akeidah* that Yitzchak begins to search for a wife and ultimately marries Rivkah.

All of this occurs *after* Sarah's death, when Yitzchak is forty years old. Yitzchak seems to get married much later in life than his father did, even though there are different opinions as to what age Avraham was when he married Sarah.

**What do you think: Why would Yitzchak wait until the age of forty, when his mother had already passed away, to find a wife and begin his married life?**

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