



Parshas Chayei Sarah

For the week ending 27 Cheshvan 5757
8 & 9 November 1996

Overview

The 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 chose a wife from amongst Avraham's family and not from the Canaanites. Eliezer travels to Aram Naharaim, to the city of Nahor, and prays to Hashem to show him a sign so he will know whom to choose. At evening time, as he is about to water his camels, Rivka providentially appears and Eliezer asks her for a drink of water. Not only does she give him to drink, but she draws water for all ten of his thirsty camels. (Some 140 gallons!) This extreme thoughtfulness and kindness is the sign that she is the right wife for Yitzchak, and a suitable mother of the Jewish People. Negotiations with Rivka's father and her brother Lavan finally result in her leaving with Eliezer. Yitzchak marries Rivka and brings her into the tent of his mother, Sarah. 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 one hundred and seventy-five and is buried next to Sarah in the Cave of Machpela.

Insights

BANKING ON THE WORLD TO COME

“Place now you hand under my thigh. And I will have you swear that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites...” (24:3)

A Jew from the country was once leading his cow to town for slaughter. The nearest town where there was a qualified *shochet* (slaughterer) was a considerable distance away, and the Jew was tired. He looked up, and he saw in the distance, coming toward him, what looked like a very distinguished rabbi.

When the Jew reached the rabbi, he asked the rabbi if he would *shecht* his cow for him. The rabbi replied in the affirmative, pulled out a *shochet's* knife, and proceeded to *shecht* the cow.

Afterward, the rabbi asked the Jew “By the way, do you think you could lend me a small sum of money for a few weeks?”

The Jew replied “I'd like to help you, but I'm afraid I really don't know who you are. Don't take it personally, but how do I know I'll get my money back?”

The rabbi looked into the Jew's face and said “When it comes to money, you want references, but with the cow, you're quite content to let a perfect stranger *shecht* your animal... Aren't you worried you'll be eating non-kosher meat?”

Eliezer was Avraham Avinu's most trusted servant. He was in charge of Avraham's considerable wealth. In this, Avraham trusted Eliezer implicitly. However, when it came to spiritual matters, to the critical choice of a wife for Yitzchak — a mother-to-be of the whole Jewish People — then Avraham made Eliezer take an oath.

If we are careful about our bank account in this world, shouldn't we, at the very least, give the same concern to our bank account in the First National Bank of *Olam Habah* (the World-to-Come)?

Based on the Be'er Mayim Chaim as heard from Rabbi Calev Gestetner, and a story by the Dubner Maggid as heard from Rabbi Reuven Subar

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ARE YOU DOZING OFF?

“And it was the life of Sarah, one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years was the life of Sarah.” (23:1)

“I dunno Rabbi — all that religion stuff is pretty complicated — I’m just a simple person — It’s over my head.”

Rabbi Akiva was giving a *drasha* (lecture) to the congregation, and they started to doze off. He said “How did Esther see that she would reign over 127 states? — She saw that she was the descendant of Sarah who lived 127 years.”

What was so *awakening* about this information, that Rabbi Akiva said it to wake his slumbering congregants? Rabbi Akiva had been talking about very lofty and exalted Torah concepts. The congregation dozed off. They thought that such elevated thoughts were way over their heads. So Rabbi Akiva wanted to awaken them to the realization that every Jew can connect to the highest Torah concepts.

For just as Esther’s ability to risk death by going before King Achashverosh without permission was her spiritual legacy from the righteousness of Sarah, similarly every Jew has a legacy to reach to the highest levels of spirituality.

Never to succumb to the negativity of “Who am I? What’s my life worth?” You have a hot-line to the highest and the deepest Torah!

Adapted from the Pri Tzadik

LIGHT BUILDING

“And Yitzchak brought her into the tent of Sarah, his mother...” (24:66)

When Sarah was alive, her Shabbos lights would stay alight from Erev Shabbos to the next Erev Shabbos. There was a blessing in her dough. And the cloud of the Divine Presence stayed connected to her tent. When she died, these manifestations ceased. But when Yitzchak brought Rivka into the tent of Sarah his mother, all three returned.

The *Mishkan* (Tent of Meeting) was a representation of the tents of the forefathers. For the same miracles that were to be found in the tents of the forefathers were also present in the *Mishkan*: Like Sarah and Rivka’s lamps, the *Ner HaMa’aravi* (Western Light in the *Mishkan*) burned miraculously. From it they would light the other lights. Like the dough of Sarah and Rivka, the Show-Breads in the *Mishkan* were blessed. They would still be warm and fresh even after a week in the *Mishkan*, and all who ate from them were satiated by but a small piece. And, of course, like the tent of the forefathers, a cloud would hover over the *Mishkan*.

Why did Sarah’s lamps burn from Erev Shabbos to Erev Shabbos?

The weekdays could not destroy the light which they achieved on Shabbos. The lamps burned all week, fueled by that same *kedusha* (holiness). Thus, when the following Shabbos arrived, the light of the lamps that were lit only added to the light that had come from the previous Shabbos.

Similarly, when they lit the lamps in the *Mishkan* from the miraculous *Ner HaMa’aravi*, they were building on the light that shone from the previous day. And thus the light would build and build...

(Adapted from the Shem MiShmuel)

Haftorah: Melachim I 1

The 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) 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 Bas-Sheva and Nasan the prophet, and the plot is foiled.

THE WILL TO DIVIDE

The Chafetz Chaim once wrote to a rich man that he was obliged to make a clear will, dividing his property between his sons, for, as we find in this week’s Haftorah, if the prophet Nasan admonished King David to leave clear instructions regarding his succession, certainly this rich man was obliged to do so. We do not find that King David was annoyed at the prophet 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)



INSIGHTS INTO THE ZEMIRO
SUNG AT THE SHABBOS TABLE
THROUGHOUT THE GENERATIONS.

KOL MEKADESH-asen kf
“WHOEVER KEEPS SHABBOS...”

Always help those who hold back from plowing and harvesting on the Seventh

עזור לשובתים בשביעי
בחריש ובקציר עולמים

Azor lashovsim bashvi'i
bechorish uvakotzir l'olamim

“*Charish*” — the Hebrew word for plowing — is a combination of the first letters of the Hebrew names for Thursday, Wednesday, Friday (*Chamishi, Revi'i, Shishi*). These three days preceding Shabbos are the time for a Jew to prepare ground for what he will plant with his service on the Day of Rest. The three days following Shabbos are similar to the harvest during which the Sabbath observer can reap the fruits of his spiritual labor. Shabbos is therefore looked upon by our Sages, not as the “end” of the week but rather its center, with all of the other days revolving around it.

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