בס"ד



Parshat Chayei Sarah

מתוך "ליקוטי שמואל"

Editor: Sam. Eisikovits

eisikovits1@gmail.com

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Efron Loses A Vov From His Name

Parshas Chayei Sarah
Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Chayei Sarah begins with the selling of a burial plot to Avraham Avinu. Avraham goes to the Bnei Cheis and wants to buy what is today known as the *Ma'aras Hamachpeila*. The owner of this property was Efron the Chiti. Efron initially claimed that he was willing to give the field to Avraham for free. Avraham said that he wanted to pay for it. Efron responded, "What is the matter of a four hundred silver-shekel field between you and me?" This was apparently a very high price for the field that he initially offered to give to Avraham for free. The narration ends by stating that Avraham paid the price mentioned by Efron – four hundred silver shekels, with the type of coins that were readily exchanged (*over la'socher*).
If we carefully look at this *pasuk* (where Efron suddenly raises the price of the plot of land from zero to four hundred silver shekels), we notice that the word Efron is first spelled "*malei*" (full – including the letter *vov*). Then, when we look at the words "Avraham paid to Efron," the name Efron is spelled "*chaser*" (lacking – without the *vov*). Sometimes the Torah does spell the same word with a *vov* and also without a *vov*. However, it is exceedingly rare for the Torah to use two different spellings of the same word in one *pasuk*!
The Medrash Rabbah comments on this anomaly and references a *pasuk* in Mishlei: "One overeager for wealth has an evil eye; he does not know what may befall him." (Mishlei 28:22). The Medrash calls Efron a man who became all excited

by the possibility of making a ton of money; however, he failed to realize that this windfall would cause something to be deducted from him (i.e., the extra *vov* in his name).

Now it is quite likely that Efron does not care how his name is spelled in the Torah. Obviously, this is not supposed to be a lesson for Efron, but rather for us. So, what is the lesson? The Alter from Kelm once said a *schmooze*, which he preceded by relating an incident that actually occurred. (It is alleged that the incident happened with Rav Yonoson Eibshitz, although there is some controversy about whether it happened to him or to another famous personage.)

The incident involved a debate that took place between the "wise men of the world" and this famous Jewish personage. The wise men were of the opinion that with enough training, an animal could be trained to be just like a human being and could change its entire nature. The Rabbi denied the claim, insisting that an animal remains an animal, and no matter how intelligent the animal is, a dog remains a dog and a horse remains a horse.

The wise men of the world took a cat and trained it to walk on its hind legs and carry a tray with its paws. Ultimately, they trained the cat to become a proficient waiter. They arranged a large banquet in which the cat would perform like a waiter and serve all the guests. The Rabbi was invited to the banquet to defend his position that an animal's nature cannot be changed. He took his snuff container with him, as he typically did. While he wasn't looking, a little mouse jumped into his snuff container.

They were at this banquet. The cat was doing its thing – carrying a little tray of wine and serving the people. The wise men said to the Rabbi, “Nu! You see!” The Rabbi pondered how to respond, and while doing so, he took out his snuff container to smell a whiff of the aroma. Suddenly, the mouse jumped out and started running around. As soon as the cat saw the mouse running, the cat did what cats do. The cat dropped the tray and ran after the mouse to catch it. The Rabbi told the wise men, “My point has been proven.”

How did the Alter from Kelm apply this story? He said as follows: Efron can dress up as the nicest and most respectable fellow in the world. He can talk the talk of generosity and magnanimity. “For sure, I will give you this land for free.” However, this is all an act. That was not the real Efron. Efron was characterized – as are many people – by the attribute mentioned in the previously cited *pasuk* in Mishlei: “*nivhal la’hon*” (overeager for wealth). When he realized that he could make money, the act ended, and the true Efron came out. The true Efron was a person who lusted money. That is why the same *pasuk* also contains the “full Efron” (with the *vov*), the civilized and generous person, to emphasize that he is not the real Efron.

Ironically, Efron is not the only character in this week’s *parsha* who we see was afflicted by lust for money. There is another such fellow in this *parsha who* suffered from the same disease.

There is an old debate of “nurture versus nature.” What dominates the development of a human personality, the way the person was raised or the way the person was born? However, sometimes we see that it is neither nurture nor

nature. Parshas Chayei Sarah contains siblings – a brother and a sister – who are diametrically different in their personalities. Lavan Ha'arami wants to wipe out *Klal Yisrael*. His sister is our Matriarch, Rivka. How do we define the difference between these two siblings, who are opposites of one another?

The central point of Lavan's nature was also about this lust for money. When Eliezer first came, Lavan ran towards him. Rashi explains why he was running: "When he saw the ten loaded camels that Eliezer brought, he assumed this fellow must be rich!" Later on, when Yaakov came, Lavan also ran out to him. He figured, if even the slave from this household was so rich, how much wealthier must be the offspring! Rashi explains that Lavan hugged Yaakov, because when he didn't see any jewelry on his person, he thought it might be hidden in his chest or even his mouth! In short, when Lavan sensed wealth, that became his entire interest and focus. That is why he eventually cheated Yaakov Avinu left and right for all the years of Yaakov's servitude to him.

The Ari *z"l* writes that Lavan has three *gilgulim* (soul transmigrations) in this world, alluded to by the three letters of his name (***L****amed* ***B****eis* ***N****un*). The three *gilgulim* were **L**avan, **B**ilaam, and **N**aval Hakarmeli. Bilaam had this same lust for money. When Balak wanted to hire him, his response was "If Balak gives me his full warehouse of silver and gold…" (Bamidbar 22:18). The third iteration of Lavan was the infamous Naval Hakarmeli, about whom the *Tanach* comments, "Naval was his name and *naval* (despicable) was he." (Shmuel I 25:25) He too, as described there, was extremely tight with his money. The common denominator

that runs through Lavan, through Bilaam, and through Naval was this lust for money, with which so many people are afflicted.

Lavan was a taker. Rivka was the polar opposite. Rivka was a giver. Even though a case could be made that she shouldn't have given water to Eliezer (and his camels), she does so graciously. Eliezer was standing by the well. He could have easily taken a drink for himself. It was *chutzpah on* his part to ask this young girl to draw the water for him. But that was Rivka.

This was a tale of two siblings: One was the ultimate taker and one was the ultimate giver. Lavan's *neshama* ends up as Bilaam and then Naval Hakarmeli. Rivka becomes Rivka Imeinu.

Why Must We Treat a Dead Body with Respect?

Parshas Chayei Sarah

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Chayei Sarah is the first parsha in the Torah in which the Torah discusses the matter of burial. Previously, people certainly died, but there is not any mention of burial. In this week's parsha, we see the importance that Avraham Avinu attached to finding a proper burial site for his wife. He buried her in the Cave of Machpela. Even though we know that Adam and Chava are buried in the Cave of Machpela, Chayei Sarah is the first place the Torah actually records a person involving himself with the burial of another human being.

The truth of the matter is that we must understand that a body only has sanctity because it contains a living soul while we are living. Once the soul leaves our body, ostensibly we would say that the body has lost the source which gave it sanctity. Therefore, why do we need to treat a body with respect and properly bury a person who died? Offhand, we might argue that a body is simply an empty vessel. What gives a human body importance after the soul leaves it?

I saw the following suggestion in a Sefer called Machat shel Yad:

The Halacha distinguishes between *Tashmishei Mitzvah* (items with which a person does a *mitzvah*, e.g. – *Tsitsis, Lulav, Succah*, etc.) and *Tashmishei Kedusha* (items which involve Scriptural writing, e.g. – *Sefer Torah, Tefillin, Mezuzah*, etc.). After Succos, a person may theoretically throw out his *Lulav* and *Esrog*. The law is that *Tashmishei Mitzvah* do not retain sanctity, and after the completion of their use for the *mitzvah performance*, a person may discard them. (There is a nice custom to use the *Lulav* to burn the *Chometz before* Pesach, but this is only a custom and not a fundamental requirement.) *Tashmishei Kedusha*, however, remain eternally holy – even after the completion of their service in the performance of a mitzvah. Even if a *Sefer Torah* or *Tefillin* fall into water and become ruined, once they had sanctity, the sanctity remains forever. The law of *Tashmishei Kedusha* prevails to such an extent that even items used as *accessories* to an item containing Torah *pesukim* (such as cloth coverings for *Sifrei Torah)* have sanctity even after they have become worn out, and must be buried rather than simply discarded.

What is the difference? The difference is that by *Tashmishei Mitzvah*, once the mitzvah is finished, there is no more holiness. However, when the Name of G-d and words of Torah are written on parchment, the holiness remains forever.

This, he explains, is why a human body has sanctity even after death. Every Jew is a vehicle for Words of Torah. Just as parchment becomes holy forever, so too a Jew who spoke words of *Divrei Torah*, who said the words *Shema Yisrael*—his body now becomes like a *Sefer Torah*. Therefore, despite the fact that the soul has left, the words of holiness that were "inscribed" on that body during his lifetime put an eternal *Kedusha* on that body, for ever and ever.

With this concept, the author explains a very famous Talmudic passage. The Gemara [Berachos 17a] asks: "These women (who do not study Torah), how do they gain merit?" The Gemara answers: The fact that women help their husbands and children learn Torah—not only do they help them, but they wait for their husbands to return from learning and they wait for their children to come back from *Cheder* (the fact that they drive carpools and take their children to learn)—this is the source of women's reward for Torah study.

The Chofetz Chaim asks the obvious question: And when a woman does *mitzvos*, is that not a source of merit for her? Will a woman not get reward in the World to Come for giving charity? Women who pray to *Hashem and* do other acts of kindness do not get reward? That cannot be!

The Chofetz Chaim answers that the Gemara is not speaking about the World to Come. Certainly, women will get *Olam haBah* for every mitzvah they perform. The Gemara is talking

about *Techiyas HaMeisim* [Resurrection of the Dead]. The Talmud [Ketuvot 111b] expounds from the *pasuk* "May Your dead come to life, may my corpses arise. Awake and shout for joy, you who rest in the dirt! For Your dew is like the dew that revives vegetation (*tal oros talecha*)…" [Yeshaya 26:19] Whoever utilizes the Light of Torah, the Light of Torah will revive him. To merit Resurrection, a person needs the "dew (i.e. – merit) of Torah". For fulfillment of all other *mitzvos*, indeed, a person will receive reward. However, *Lulav, Esrog, Tefillah*, etc. will not gain a person new life in the time of Resurrection. *Techiyas HaMeisim* requires the "dew of Torah" to revive him.

It follows that the Gemara poses a reasonable question: How will these women merit Resurrection? They do not study Torah! With what merit, then, will they receive *Techiyas HaMeisim*? The Gemara answers that they do have the merit of Torah because they are enablers of Torah. Enablers of Torah, from a certain perspective, get even greater reward than those who engage in Torah learning itself. There is "enjoyment" in learning Torah, but there is no "enjoyment' in driving carpool. There is no "fun" in waiting for one's husband to return from learning. The husband's learning is enjoyable for him. Merely waiting for him is not so enjoyable.

In order to merit *Techiyas HaMeisim*, a person needs to possess the merit of Torah. Why? Because it is the merit of Torah that provides the person with the sanctity that makes him worthy of being revived at the time of Resurrection. We merit such revival because we are in effect *Sifrei Torah*, *Kisvei Kodesh*! The *Zechus haTorah* that women possess in an auxiliary fashion, in an enabling fashion, makes them into *Kisvei haKodesh*.

Therefore, their bodies have eternal sanctity as well, and that is why they too will rise at the time of *Techiyas haMeisim*.

A life to die for

Written by Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

And the life of Sarah was one hundred years, and twenty years, and seven years – the years of Sarah's life (23:1)

After being informed that Yitzchak was imminently about to be killed, Sarah became so distressed that "her soul flew from her and she died."[1] Sarah was one of the greatest people to have ever lived; her level of prophecy was even greater than Avraham's,[2] so how could it be that she would be so distressed at the thought of her son dying *al Kiddush Hashem*, *to sanctify God's name,* when the reward for this *mitzvah* is so great?

Rav Moshe Shternbuch answers that while it is true that one receives tremendous reward for sanctifying Hashem's name through one's death, it is infinitely greater to be able to sanctify Hashem's name through one's life. This is what caused Sarah so much distress — she knew that Yitzchak was destined to continue the chain of the Jewish people; he was one of the fundamental pillars of the entire religion, so even if his reward *would* have been great as a result of his sacrifice, it would not have matched his reward through living a life of *kiddush Hashem*.

A similar message is recorded by *Rav Yosef Karo* in his kabbalistic work, the *Maggid Mesharim*, which records some of the teachings that *Rav Yosef Karo* had with the *Maggid*— an angel who would appear to him and teach him hidden depths of Torah. Many times, it appears that the angel promised Rav Yosef Karo that he would merit to die a martyr's death, *al kiddush Hashem,**[3]*and taught Rav Yosef Karo how to prepare himself for this. However, when *Rav Yosef Karo* was in his eighties, he questioned the angel whether he would indeed die a martyr's

death. The angel answered him that this was in fact what was going to happen to him originally, but since he lived his entire life sanctifying Hashem's name, nothing greater would be achieved through his death — the opposite in fact, because Rav Yosef Karo's every moment was a sanctification of Hashem's name — something that has a far greater effect than a one-off sacrifice of dying *al kiddush Hashem*.

Sanctifying Hashem's name in our lives does not only mean the big things. We don't need to save a life, or give a lot of *tzedaka* to live a life of *kiddush Hashem*, it's the small actions and the daily challenges that we face every day which count towards living *al kiddush Hashem*, as the *Rambam* writes:

"If a Torah scholar will be careful about his behavior, will speak pleasantly to people, act friendly toward them, receive them with a pleasant facial expression, will refrain from retorting when he is insulted, will honor even those who treat him with disdain, will be honest in his business dealings…This is kiddush Hashem!"[4]

So, if we think of the great reward for dying *al kiddush Hashem* and realize that living *al kiddush Hashem* (a greater feat) is within our reach, surely that will give us the inspiration to live with a greater awareness of our daily actions.

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[1]*Medrash Tanchuma* describes that the *satan* appeared to Sarah and showed her a vision of Yitzchak tied to the altar about to be sacrificed. She spoke to him to find out what was happening, and he described that his father had bound him and was about to offer him as a sacrifice. However, before the *satan* let Sarah hear that Hashem had prevented Avraham from carrying out his mission, her soul had already left her. (see *Rashi* 23:2 and *Medrash Tanchuma* at the end of Parshas Vayeira, 23)

[2] Rashi, (Bereishis 22:3)

[3] For examples, see Parshas Bechukosai (41).

[4] Hilchos Yesodos HaTorah 5:11

Any regrets?

Written by H Jackson

This week's Sidra begins: "VaYiheyu Chayei Sarah … VaTamot Sarah BeKiryat Arba Hee Chevron BeEretz Canaan VaYavo Avraham Lispod LeSarah VeLivkotah." which means: *"And Sarah lived … And Sarah died in Kiryat Arba which is Chevron in the land of Canaan and Avraham came to mourn for Sarah and to cry for her." (Bereishit 23:1-2)*
Kohelet Yitzchak asks: The verse states that Avraham came but does not tell us where from? Since it is usual to cry before one mourns (hesped, i.e. telling stories about the departed's righteousness), why does the verse not state "Livkot LeSarah UleSofdah" i.e. "To cry for Sarah and to mourn for her"? Why is there a small letter Kaf in the word VeLivkotah meaning "and to cry for her"? Satan's role: We are familiar with the explanation of Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer (Chapter 32) that Satan informed Sarah that Avraham was sacrificing their son Yitzchak, and Sarah then verified this with the local giants who could see Mount Moriah
. Consequently, Sarah's soul left her. This presents a difficulty though, because Satan is an agent of God whose role is to try to prevent us from fulfilling Mitzvot; Satan's role is surely not to take revenge against Avraham for overcoming him! Sincere regret: God does not net Mitzvot against sins. Rather, each Mitzvah merits a reward and each sin a punishment. It is common knowledge that if we have sinned but admit and sincerely regret our misdeed accompanied by the resolve not to repeat the sin, then we can actually remove the existence of the sin. What is less well known is that a similar scenario operates concerning Mitzvot.
Gemara Kiddushin 40b teaches that if one performs a Mitzvah but then sincerely regrets doing that good deed, one loses the merit of the Mitzvah, and it is treated as though the good deed was never performed! Satan's strategy Satan first tries to prevent a person from observing a Mitzvah by placing obstacles in the way, e.g. "just another ten minutes in bed". If that fails, Satan will allow the Mitzvah to be performed but then try to cause

the person to regret having performed the Mitzvah, e.g. “wishing we had not helped someone because we have now arrived late for a meeting”. Rabbi Yisrael Salanter thus explains the phrase in our prayers “VeHaseir Satan Milefaneinu Umei’achareinu” – we pray that God should remove the Satan before and after our deeds. With respect to Avraham, Satan soon realized he had met his match when Avraham traversed all the hurdles placed before him.

For instance, the Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni 1:99) relates that even the pool of water which Satan put in front of Avraham did not deter him from his mission of reaching Mount Moriah to enact the Akeidah. Satan therefore decided the only way to challenge Avraham was to try to encourage him to sincerely regret the Akeidah (binding of Yitzchak) after the event.

So, Satan went to Sarah and tricked her into believing that Avraham had sacrificed Yitzchak (Yalkut Reuveni). Sarah died, and Satan plan was that Avraham would then return from the Akeidah and realise that Sarah’s death was due to the Akeidah.

If Avraham would then regret performing his Mitzvah, he would lose the merit as we have explained. (Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky explains that the time had anyway arrived for Sarah’s soul to depart from her, but Satan ensured that her death had an association with the Akeidah.)

However, Avraham’s greatness was such that he was able to publicly prove he did not regret the Akeidah at all when (1.) he came back, because (2.) he delayed crying until after the mourning (hesped) and even then (3.) cried a reduced amount.

Why is Eliezer’s name not mentioned in his moment of glory?

Written by D Fine

If you asked Eliezer, Avraham's servant, what his proudest moment in life was, he probably would have told you at length the story about how he went to find a wife for Yitzchak. However, throughout this entire episode Eliezer's name is not mentioned once; he is referred to as 'the servant' (and occasionally 'the man'). Why is his name omitted from his greatest achievement in life?
The idea is that just the opposite is true. The word servant (eved) is the greatest accolade one can get when it is in reference to someone like Avraham Avinu. A servant is someone willing to blend into their master's wishes as opposed to having their own agenda. Eliezer's greatness lies in the fact that he was a true servant of Avraham Avinu – he believed in Avraham's philosophy and taught others too. Just as Moshe's great accolade is that he is called 'eved HaShem' so too Eliezer's greatness is that he is 'eved Avraham.' And specifically on this mission to find a wife for Yitzchak, when Avraham was not with Eliezer and Eliezer could have used the trip to do things other than that which he was sent for, are we told that he was none other than Avraham's servant – he kept loyally to the task in hand.

Humor

- **Why didn't the widow attend the 9:00 AM funeral?** She wasn't a mourning person.
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- **The inventor of throat lozenges has died.** There'll be no coffin at his funeral.
-
- **The man who invented the remote control died yesterday.** He is being buried down the back of a sofa.
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- **Why don’t skeletons fight?** Because they don’t have the guts.