

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

HAYYE SARAH

NOVEMBER 19, 2011

22 HESHVAN 5772

Manhattan Minyan*** Artistic Frame 979 3rd Ave D&D Building (Between 58-59th Street) Suite 1705

Contact Rabbi Daniel Greenwald danny@artisticframe.com

4pm Minha followed by Arbit

We'll be in Eretz Yisrael next week so we may not have a newsletter for Toldot

SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION OF LONG BEACH SCHEDULE

David is away this Shabbat and next Shabbat – He will be in Israel – Please print copies for distribution

We want to welcome Baruch and Michal Abittan this Shabbat. Baruch will be giving the morning Derasha (sermon) as well as a very special class based on the Zohar after Arbit. In addition, the kiddush this week is sponsored by the Congregation in Honor of Ariel and Andrea Ganz Tzetchem L'Shalom the house is finally ready in Far Rockaway. They have done so much for the Synagogue in the last few years and we will all miss them dearly. Please join us for this special Shabbat.

REFUAH SHELEMAH

Tzirel bas Basha, Riki Mehira Rut bat Zerizah, Yisroel Moshe ben Chasya Miriam

SHABBAT SCHEDULE

- **Mincha** at 4:20 – Followed by Kabbalat Shabbat and Arbit (Candle Lighting: 4:16)
- **Shaharith:** 9:00 / **Mincha** following Kiddush
- **Benai Asher Youth Program** 10:45 – 11:45 Coordinated by Orah Burstyn
- **Arbit** at 5:30pm followed by Havdalah – Shabbat ends at 5:17pm
- After Arbit Apx 6:00PM, Class with Baruch Abittan: "The Kabbalah of Time and The Secret to Avraham's Success. Savor every moment." - Based on the Zohar in Hok LeYisrael, day 1 of Hayyei Sarah. If you don't come, you won't UNDERSTAND what you missed!!
- **Motzi Shabbat– LIGHTS CAMERA ACTION!** led by Sarina Amiel, Riki Waldman, Yosef Kahn and Moses Bibi – Practice will be immediately following arbit for 45 minutes. Under the supervision of Yosef Colish
- **Movie Melvah Malka** – *Young Avraham* – an awesome Disney Like movie – appropriate for all ages. 6:30 PM. There will be **Pizza** Sponsored by the Mizrahi Family. We are seeking 4 sponsors for our monthly Movie Melava Malka. Please speak to Yosef to help out.
- **Latte & Learning with Leah This Saturday Night** 8:15 at Starbucks.

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

- **Sunday Shaharit** 8:00 – Followed by breakfast and our Tefilah Class tanat 8:45am
- **Shaharit Mon-Fri** at 7:00 (6:55 Mondays and Thursdays)
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SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION OF LONG BEACH ADDITIONAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEEKLY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE

- **"How to Retire Young & Wealthy"** *Mon-Fri 6:30 AM* - based upon The Duties of the Heart (Gate of Trust) Led by Rabbi Yosef Colish
- **Pizmonim** *Monday Nights 9:30-10:00* Led by Barry Pinto
- **Women's Learning Group** *Tuesday Night 8:00 -9:15*. BYOTT (bring your own Torah teaching)
- **Kosher Kitchen** – We will have a series of classes in a Kosher Kitchen – Details to follow

The mens Halacha class will continue in 2 weeks on November 29th when we will begin a new cycle We will be studying the Laws of Basar VeChalav - Milk and Meat - in depth from the Torah sources through the Talmud, Rishonim and Acharonim up to present day Poskim

We will be following the Shulchan Aruc from Yoreh Deah 87 through 97

There are thirt separate classes - each with a PDF accompaniment of about 10 pages

Including review and quizzes along the way, we will B'H finish around summer time and be tested.

To join please speak with Herman, Hal, Michael or David.

SPECIAL EVENTS

- **Sephardic/Young Israel Chanuka Carnival** – details to follow. Thanks to Atara Pinto for volunteering to sit on the steering committee. Other volunteers are welcome.
- **Annual Thanksgiving Day Men's Football Game** *Thursday November 24th* Bach vs. Sephardic 11 AM. More details to follow - Coordinated by Sam Shetrit
- **Paintball Trip** – Bach vs Sephardic November 27th *Leaving at 9:30 AM*. Speak to Yosef or Sam Shetrit to sign up. Must pre-pay \$25 to reserve your spot by November 23rd
- **Bikur Cholim** – *Sunday morning December 4* Visit Hoffman Manor, share your smile & make someone's day! Coordinated by Patti Azizo.
- **Annual Sisterhood dinner** will be held on Tuesday December 13. Our honorees this year are Alan and Karen Cohn. Please reserve the date. Details to follow

Thanks again to Herman and Rebecca Ovadia and Eli Altarac for continuing with our Bakery run every Friday, to Jeff Metviner for shopping for and sponsoring the twice monthly Costco run for the shul, and to Karen Cohn and Sarina Amiel for their hard work on our new website. Chazak u'Baruch!

We also want to thank Ari Waldman for all his hard work for putting away the seforim in our shul each week. Yosef Kahn will now be joining him. Chazak

The South Shore Vaad HaKashrus is happy to announce that effective immediately Life's a Bagel, 76 West Park Avenue (corner National) (516) 889-8470 is under the Vaad's supervision

Please note the following: All bagels, challah rolls, regular rolls (uncut) and Challahs are parve and are pas yisroel. Parve items are sold from the bagel bin section.

Everything else in the store must be treated as dairy. This includes all appetizers (tuna, white fish, and sliced lox) soups, in addition to all cakes muffins & cookies Dairy Products are not Cholev Yisroel.

please reply to
ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com
 Editors Notes

We have a client who is a great guy; he is kind and generous with his time and his money. He would be the first to admit though that when it comes to Torah and Misvot, he has no connection whatsoever. He is absolutely nonobservant, he states, with one exception. He dedicates himself on the side to be a shadchan – a matchmaker. He knows everyone and when he sees two people that he thinks are perfect for each other, he goes all out to bring them together. And he has had success. He firmly believes that once he achieves a certain number of good matches, he gets the keys to the Garden of Eden, a pass into heaven.

This week we meet the first matchmaker. Although he is nameless in the portion and refers to himself and is referred to by the verses only as the servant of Abraham again and again, we are told he is none other than Eliezer. One must wonder why Eliezer who is the head of Abraham's school, who single handedly, fought a war against the powers of the world, who is the most trusted with keys to the safe becomes only the servant.

Additionally, one wonders why the conversation between Abraham and Eliezer lacks Isaac as a participant. Isaac we understand is now 40 years old. Wouldn't he play some role in the selection of a wife? And if we presume that Isaac was forbidden from leaving the Holy Land, why force Eliezer to swear he wouldn't take him from the country? Why enjoin Eliezer to be sure that Isaac wouldn't marry a Canaanite? Wouldn't it be simpler to have included Isaac in the discussion? Send Eliezer to Charan and if he was successful,

fine and if not than Isaac would handle the task in Israel.

Once Chava (Eve) had her intimate conversation with the Nachash – the snake, the Rabbis tell us that the impurity of the snake entered mankind. Some have more and some have less. Kayin, her eldest son, had more. With the destruction of the flood, Noah a descendant of Shet has three children with Naamah, a descendant of Kayin. The piece of the snake goes from her to her son Cham. We see this as Cham is cursed.

When discussing the search for a wife for Isaac, Eliezer suggests to Abraham that Eliezer's own daughter be considered. After all Eliezer as we noted is the Rosh Yeshiva, the Secretary of State, the Head of Abraham's military force, and the most trusted of all. Could there be a better match? Yet Abraham explains to Eliezer that because he is cursed while Abraham has been blessed by G-d, the two families cannot join.

How is Eliezer cursed? As the rabbis explain, Hagar was not the only member of a royal family to leave her palace and join Abraham and Sarah. Eliezer too was a prince. He was the son of Nimrod, the same Nimrod who threw Abraham into the fire. Eliezer left his own father to join Abraham. Nimrod was the son of Kush, grandson of Cham. Cham's curse passed into his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. And that curse came with a piece of the snake. In the Gemarah, Eliezer is listed as one of the nine people who went alive into Gan Eden. Does this sound like someone cursed? What's going on here?

In life, we are all faced with tests. Some tests are greater and some less so, but each test is designed particularly for each of us and

each test given so that we might pass it and be rewarded.

Eliezer was in fact infected with the curse of the snake. It was the snake who attempted to destroy Adam in order to take Chava for himself. When man allows his inclination to rule over him and allows his desires to overwhelm everything else, he is in fact acting like the snake. Avraham sees Eliezer's soul. He sees where the blemish lays and devises a huge test to clear it up.

Just as Abraham and Sarah fix aspects of Adam and Chava as we mentioned. Isaac and Rivkah must also fix aspects of Adam and Chavah. In fact we see that Sarah's job falls into the hands of Rivkah who comes to occupy here mother in law's tent and the miracles that took place for Sarah continue through Rebecca. The snake who tries to break up Adam and Chavah, who wants Chavah for himself, who brings exile from the Garden and death, is now through Eliezer tasked to do the opposite.

He is to bring Rebecca to Isaac fixing his attempted break of Adam and Chavah. He is to exercise trust and faith in Hashem and speak of it as opposed to the lashon harah the evil speech he used in the garden telling Chava that G-d was afraid of them. He is to refer to himself only as the servant of Abraham as the snake should have been the servant of man. He is to escort Rebecca without touching her to make up for the snake touching Chava. He is to keep Isaac in the Holy Land to make up for causing Adam's eviction from the Garden. He is to arrange the marriage as opposed to the separation where Adam left Chava for a 130 year period following the expulsion.

Rav Eliezer Chrysler quotes Midrash Agadah and states that it

appears that Yitzchak had good reason to suspect Eliezer of having raped Rivkah on the journey back. One might wonder at how this is possible to even imagine. The Rosh Yeshiva, the trusted one have raped or slept with Rivkah on the journey?

But when one understands the root of Eliezer's soul, the piece of the snake and the test to undo that piece, the accusation makes much more sense. There are so many more clues in the portion but let's conclude with one, The strange and only words of Betuel, Rebecca's father. "The matter has come out from G-d: we cannot speak to you about whether it is evil or good". Evil of Good – a strange choice of words. This great sorcerer too saw the test and what was happening. He too saw this as repairing the eating from the tree of good and evil.

As a result of passing his test set up by Abraham, as a result of a blessing which comes from Laban who calls Eliezer, "Blessed one of G-d" and essentially replaces the curse with a blessing and as a result of being falsely accused by Isaac who when he discovered that his suspicions were ill-founded, followed the Halachah and gave him a blessing. And what was the blessing? That Eliezer would enter Gan Eden alive, a blessing that was soon realized as Eliezer disappears from the scene and is one of nine given that privilege and opportunity.

Perhaps this is the source where a matchmaker who achieves a certain number of matches receives the key to the Garden of Eden up in heaven. For in making that match, finding that find, catching that catch, the matchmaker repairs the sin of the snake which evicted us from the Garden in the first place and

becomes worthy for an invitation back.

Time to play Shadchan!

Shabbat Shalom
David Bibi

The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st Aliya: Avraham negotiates with Ephron the Hitite to purchase the Cave of Machpelah as a burial place for Sarah. Tradition says that this is also the burial place of Adam and Chava.

2nd Aliya: Avraham sends Eliezar, his trusted servant, to Aram Naharayim, (between the Tigris and the Euphrates) to find Yitzchak a shiduch - a bride.

3rd Aliya: Leading a caravan of supplies and riches, Eliezar arrives in Nachor. While resting by "the well", he devises a test to ascertain the worthiness of a potential mate for Yitzchak. Rivkah (Yitzchak's 1st cousin once removed) meets all the criteria and Eliezar presents her with the appropriate gifts.

4th Aliya: Eliezar is invited into Bisuel's home (Rivkah's father) and he relates the entire story of his mission and his encounter with Rivkah. Eliezar asks for her hand in marriage to Yitzchak. Bisuel and Lavan (Rivka's brother) agree.

5th Aliya: Rivkah express her desire to depart immediately. Her family blesses her, and Eliezar brings her to Canaan. Yitzchak marries Rivka in the year 2108.

6th & 7th Aliyot: Avraham marries Keturah (some say she was Hagar) and has 6 more sons. Avraham dies in 2123 - 1638 b.c.e. at the age of 175. His two sons Yitzchak and Yishmael bury him in the Cave of Machpelah. Yishmael's 12 sons are listed and

Yishmael dies at 137.

This week's Haftorah is from the first chapter of Kings 1. Dovid Hamelech (the King) is old and must confront the inevitable succession of the throne. His 40 year reign as King of Israel had been blessed with great success, and he had secured the security and sovereignty of the nation. Yet, in his personal life he had suffered great tragedies and hardships. Having already survived the rebellion of his son Avsholom, he must now confront the rebellion of his son Adoniyahu, and his trusted General, Yoav.

The Haftorah relates the foresight and courage of Batsheva, the mother of Shlomo, and the help of Nasan the Navi, in guaranteeing the succession of Shlomo to become the next King.

The relationship of this story to our Parsha is the planned succession of the throne. Just as Dovid must plan for the next stage of Israel's leadership; so too must Avraham accept the inevitable end and look to Yitzchak's future. Just as Dovid oversees the succession while still living, and steps aside to guarantee a proper and secure change; so too does Avraham take the necessary steps of securing Jewish national development while he is still alive and in a position to continue teaching and directing

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

Rabbi Reuven Semah

"And Abraham came to eulogize Sarah and to bewail her." (Beresheet 23:2)

The parashah begins with a sorrowful event, the passing of our matriarch Sarah. The Midrash comments that when the

Torah says that "Abraham came," it means he came from the mountain of Moriah after the test of the sacrifice of Yitzhak. Her passing occurred when she heard that Yitzhak was almost slaughtered. When the pasuk says "Abraham came," it doesn't only mean that he physically came from there, but it also is a hint of the subject of the eulogy Abraham gave. He came, meaning, his approach to the eulogy was that her greatness was that she brought up a son who happily went to be potentially slaughtered for a sacrifice to Hashem. This was a great accomplishment on the part of Sarah. Upon reaching this great level of accomplishment, she attained her goal in life and therefore left this world.

The Hafess Hayim brings us an amazing story on this subject. It is stated in the Talmud Yerushalmi (Peah 1:1) that Rabbi Tarfon became very ill. When the great Rabbis came to visit, his mother cried to them that they must pray for him. She began describing to them the amazing extent he went to observe the misvah of honoring her, his mother. Once her shoe strap broke while she was walking outside. He bent down and made her walk on his hands in order that her feet wouldn't get dirty. Also, one time the small ladder she used to climb onto her bed broke, so he bent down so she could climb on him to get onto the bed! The Rabbis responded that if this is all he did he didn't reach even halfway what the Torah requires of him!

Their comment was very strange; after all, at this time it would seem right to praise Rabbi Tarfon's great level in order to build up his great merit to come forth and save his life. Instead they belittled his level and said it was not so great?

The answer is that every person comes to this world to

attain a certain goal in spirituality. Once the person has success and reaches those goals, he goes up to heaven to receive his rewards in the Next World. At the moment the Rabbis heard his amazing performance in honoring his mother, they were afraid that that was the reason why he was about to leave the world and he would not become healed from his illness. Therefore they belittled his deeds and were making a statement that he needs to get well in order to continue to attain higher levels of honoring his mother which will take many years!

Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

"For [Hagar] said, 'Let me not see the death of the child'" (Beresheet 21:16)

Hagar moved away from her son, Yishmael, when he was dying of thirst because, as she said, "I can't bear to see him in this state." One of the commentators points out that although this may be acceptable for Hagar, it is not an attribute for a Jewish mother. Even when things are as difficult to cope with as someone in extreme thirst, a mother stays by her child to see what can be done.

We must apply this to most of life's situations, not only the dangerous ones. It may be more pleasant for a parent not to know when a child is doing something wrong, rather than confront the child and face the problem. This is not the way of life for a Jewish parent. One must be involved in his child's upbringing, and if anything needs correcting, one must face the situation directly. It may be unpleasant but it is the only way that will yield positive results in our children.

RABBI ELI MANSOUR Finding the Silver Lining

Parashat Hayeh-Sara begins with the story of Sara Imenu's death, and Abraham's purchase of the Machpela cave in Hebron as a burial site. This story follows the story of Akedat Yishak, which is perhaps the most remarkable event in the entire Tanach, when Abraham was prepared to obey God's command to sacrifice his beloved son, Yishak.

Surprisingly, there are some Rabbis who point to the story of Abraham's purchase of Me'arat Ha'machpela as the tenth of Abraham's tests. The Mishna in Pirkeh Abot mentions that Abraham was subjected to ten tests, and the commentators disagree in identifying precisely what these ten tests were. Most assume that Akedat Yishak was the final and most challenging of the ten tests. According to one view, however, the test of Akedat Yishak was followed by the tenth test – the test of Sara's death and purchasing a burial site.

In order to understand why this incident constituted a test for Abraham, we must understand the nature of Abraham's tests. What made these tests difficult was the fact that they entailed contradictions. For example, God commanded Abraham to move to Eretz Yisrael and promised that he would enjoy wealth and prosperity. But soon after his arrival in the land, the area was struck by a severe drought, forcing him to go to Egypt, where his wife was abducted. Abraham's test was enduring the hardship without questioning God, accepting whatever happens and firmly believing that everything that God does is just and for his benefit. Akedat Yishak, too, involved a contradiction. After promising Abraham that a great nation would emerge from Yishak,

God commanded him to slaughter him as a sacrifice before Yishak was married. Once again, Abraham asked no questions and proceeded with resolute faith to comply with the divine command.

This happened again with the test of Sara's death. After the Akeda, God promised Abraham eternal rewards for his unbridled devotion, and proclaimed that he would be blessed for obeying the command to sacrifice his son. And yet, when he returned home, he learned that his wife had died. In fact, she died as a result of the Akeda; our Sages teach that she perished upon hearing that her son was nearly offered as a sacrifice. And, even after having been promised Eretz Yisrael, he ended up having to pay an exorbitant price for the burial site.

Abraham could have been tempted to ask, "Is this fair? After agreeing to offer my son as a sacrifice, is this what I deserve? And didn't you promise to bless me in reward for my obedience?" But Abraham did not question God; he accepted what came without any questions or complaints.

In truth, in this episode Abraham rose to even greater heights than he had in the previous tests. The Ramban (Rabbi Moshe Nahmanides, 1194-1270) comments that the story of Sara's death and burial demonstrates God's benevolence toward Abraham, showing the respect that he commanded among the people of Canaan. Abraham purchased the plot of land from the Hittim, who treated him with reverence and even offered him the land for free. The greatness of Abraham was that despite everything he was going through, he still recognized God's kindness. The Torah says that when the Hittim offered Abraham a parcel of land for Sara's burial,

he bowed – and the Ramban explains that he bowed to God, to thank Him for allowing him to properly bury his wife. Although he had just lost his wife, despite God's promise of reward, Abraham had the faith and composure to give praise and thanks to Hashem for the kindness he received. He was grateful for the way he was treated by the people around him, and for having the opportunity to give his wife a respectful burial. As hard as things were, Abraham saw the silver lining and expressed his appreciation to Hashem.

This is even a greater level of piety and faith. Not only did Abraham accept God's decisions without asking questions, he went even further – actually thanking God and feeling grateful for everything that was good.

This is an important example for us to follow. Yes, life can be difficult and trying; we all go through "tests" of one sort or another throughout our lives. As the descendants of heirs of Abraham Abinu, we must look for the silver lining in every dark cloud, and find Hashem's kindness and benevolence even during life's more difficult periods. We all have what to be grateful for, no matter the situation. Our patriarch showed us how to be grateful and appreciative even in hard times. Through unwavering faith in God's justice, we are able to withstand even life's most difficult tests, and remain content and joyous over the many wonderful blessings we have been given.

Rabbi Wein

Finding the right mate has always been a complicated and potentially hazardous matter. It remains so today. Just ask any parent in our current society who has marriageable age children and you will, in all probability, hear a tale of angst and frustration about the inequities of life and the illogic of it all. In this week's parsha, Avraham faces the task of finding a wife for Yitzchak. His main concern is that the prospective bride be from his extended family and not from the Canaanite women.

Jewish tradition has always viewed the family as being an important component in choosing a proper mate. Though family certainly cannot be the only criterion, it certainly is an important one. The rabbis taught us that the speech and language of a child is always a reflection of the speech and language of the father and mother of that child. People who are raised in serene and loving home environments, homes of tradition and Jewish values usually grow up to be serene, self-confident and proud Jews.

Children who are raised in dysfunctional family environments have great hurdles to overcome to achieve self-worth and a productive life. Both the Canaanites and Avraham's family in Aram were pagans. But Avraham's family had the stability and a minimum code of morality, traits that were lacking in the more permissive and licentious Canaanite society. This was the curse of the Canaanite society and Avraham felt that this factor would be impossible to ever truly overcome.

Eliezer, the loyal servant of Avraham, adds another requirement to the search for the mate of Yitzchak. Innate kindness

and goodness and the willingness to sacrifice one's own comforts for the sake of others is part of the makeup of Yitzchak, He was raised in a house where concern for the welfare of others was the everyday norm. A husband and wife have to be on the same page when it comes to this issue.

I recall that in my years as a rabbi there were husbands and wives that would bring to me money to distribute to the needy of the community and caution me not to allow their respective spouse to become aware that they had done so. Sometimes there were halachic or overriding family issues present that even forced me not to accept the donation. But I was always saddened by such situations.

Eliezer's testing of Rivkah was correctly done in order to spare the couple possibly ruinous disputes in their future life together. And since in the house of Avraham and Sarah kindness of spirit and generosity of action and behavior were the fundamental norms of their family life, only a spouse that also espoused those ideals could bring to Yitzchak happiness and serenity.

The Canaanite society that tolerated and even exalted the societies of Sodom and Amorah could not produce a suitable mate for Yitzchak. The Torah tells us that Yitzchak loved Rivkah. Love is based on character traits and shared values and not only on physical beauty and attraction. That is what makes its achievement so elusive for so many

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky - Parsha Parables

Sweetening the Deal

It began as a magnanimous offer; it ended up costing about one million dollars.

Here is the story, I will paraphrase the beginning of this week's Torah portion, Chayai Sora, and try to be as true to the text as possible. (I will enclose my comments in parenthesis) "Sarah died in Kiryat Arba, known now as Chevron and Avraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her. And Avraham rose up from before his dead, and spoke unto the children of Ches, saying: 'I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.'

And the children of Ches answered Avraham, saying unto him: 'Hear us, my lord: you are a mighty prince among us; in the choice of our sepulchers (burial caves) bury your dead (wife); none of us shall withhold from you his burial caves, but that you may bury your dead'" (Genesis 23:2-6).

(So far it seems that they respond, "Sure! Whatever you want and it's yours!") "Avraham rose up, and bowed down to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth. And he spoke with them, saying: 'If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and entreat for me to Ephron the son of Zochar, that he may give me the Machpelah (double) Cave, which belongs to him, which is at the end of his field; for a full price let him give it to me in your midst for burial property.'" (ibid v. 7-9).

(Avraham responds to their generous entreats that no one will hold back their land from him by asking for a specific plot owned by Ephron. Avraham adds that he has no intentions of 'shnorring'

and that he will pay the full price of a grave.)

"Now Ephron was sitting in the midst of the sons of Heth, and Ephron the Hittite answered Avraham in the hearing (earshot) of the sons of Heth, of all those who had come into the gate of his city, saying, 'No, my lord, listen to me! I have given you the field, and the cave that is in it, I have given it to you. Before the eyes of the sons of my people, I have given it to you; bury your dead.'" (ibid v. 10-11).

(Sounds really generous. Ephron refuses to hear any offer of money. In the earshot of all his neighbors, he is committing himself to gift the grave.)

"And Avraham bowed down before the people of the land. And he spoke unto Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying: "But, if only you would listen to me. I am giving the money for the field; take [it] from me, and I will bury my dead there" (ibid v. 12-13).

(Avraham insists. He bows again! He wants to pay. Now here comes the kicker.) Ephron answered Avraham, saying unto him: 'My lord, listen to me: a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between me and you? Bury your dead.' (ibid v. 14-15).

(That was fast! From free to 400 silver shekel - estimated at about one million dollars in less than 60 seconds!)

Indeed Avraham agrees to Ephron and pays the full price and the Torah tells us that the deal was indeed consummated.

What happened here? How does it happen that Ephron begins by insisting that he will give the field as a magnanimous gift to the

distinguished prince and ends up charging one million dollars? R' Hershel Ostroplier was a prankster who lived in poverty and often targeted the rich and powerful. Though gracious, he never minded to use his skill to make a couple of kopeks. Many stories, some true and some apocryphal dance around his persona. One of them goes as follows: Hershel was once was kibitzing for a group of rich fellows who were enjoying his antics at no charge. Suddenly one of them flashed a silver coin in front of Hershel. The poor prankster's eyes lit up. "Hershel," said the man, "they say you know how to make up tall tales and are wonderful at telling fibs. I'll tell you what. Quickly tell me one of your lies and I'll give you this silver coin!" Hershel didn't miss a beat. "Just that silver coin?!" He snapped. "You just promised me 100 silver coins!"

The Message

My dear friend and mentor, Rav Yissochor Frand, shlit"a, recently gifted me his wonderful new sefer, Rabbi Frand on the Parasha - Volume 3. In it he expresses (through a different story) a poignant thought. People can change in an instant. Flash a coin and suddenly images of 99 more are seen by wanting eyes. Make an offer to pay and suddenly the offer of a gracious gift turns into a one million dollar real estate deal! Ephron, perhaps wanted to give a gift, but when Avraham mentioned money, instinct kicked in and the free offer was gone. Instead of the fair price that Avraham was ready to pay, came an overpriced demand that unfortunately Avraham couldn't refuse!

Ricky Cohen Righteous Love

"And the love they shared was a deep love..."

"And the love they shared was a forever love..."

"And the love they shared was a righteous love..."

A righteous person is someone who will do what's expected and correct - even when he/she won't be held accountable for those actions - nor recognized for them. A righteous person is someone who understands his inherent obligations to others - and is committed to live up to those obligations - even those never explicitly delineated. Righteous love is a love based on the beauty of the persona - who the person is and whom they're striving to become. It's a love heavily focused on a person's core character traits and unshakeable values, his/her dreams and ambitious goals. Righteous love deepens with time, as the quality of the loved one's character is further revealed, and with each challenge and situation. Travelling on a long journey, for example, whether it is the journey to another country in the time of a famine, or the journey to direct and safeguard a family, will reveal greatness of character, depth of strength, clarity, and perseverance - and will deepen and enhance righteous love. Righteous love is the love shared by our patriarch and matriarch, Abraham and Sarah. A portal to an understanding of the love shared between Abraham and Sarah is Abraham's comment on Sarah's beauty: "I now know how beautiful you are". Embedded in his praise referencing her physical beauty, is an acknowledgement of her internal beauty - with which she interacted with the world around her. Expressed in his words of

admiration was an acknowledgement of the beauty of her character and her spirit. The meta-message of these words was a private - and public, announcement of how Sarah dreamed and laughed, cried, thought and engaged everything in her world.

So what do righteous lovers do differently than the rest of us? They understand that their responsibility is to create a perpetual podium of praise where the internal beauty of their partner will be proclaimed. When Sarah our matriarch dies, her age is described in a way that generates discussion and speculation. It is written that she was: "... 100 years old, twenty years old, and seven years old, and these were the years of Sarah." And in the following verse it says that Abraham came to mourn his wife and cry for her. Some suggest that this unusual description of Sarah's age was an expression of her general greatness. It certainly was - but it was more: It was a description of Abraham's love for her. These words were written to confirm what we sensed earlier, that Abraham celebrated his wife's inner beauty - expressing his righteous love - until and after the final moments of her life. At the time of Sarah's death at the age of one hundred and twenty seven, after having spent over one hundred years with her (!), Abraham saw in Sarah all of the purity and perfection he saw when she was 20. And when thinking about her physical beauty, he pictured her as perfect as a child of the age of 7. This is righteous love. This is the love that should be directed at our spouses and all of the other precious people in our lives. When Abraham hears of Sarah's death it is written that he mourned and then cried. Generally speaking, at a time of loss, the order is reversed. A person will

first cry at the notification of the loss, and will then assess the gravity of the loss. In this case the gravity of the loss was paramount.

In order to build righteous love with those closest to you - do two things:

Acknowledge and Encourage. Acknowledge: Showcase the virtues of those you love rather than - expecting them to be. Establish a top of mind perspective to look for and note that person's dreams and hopes, what he/she has dedicated his life to achieve and the areas where he excels.

And then Encourage those outstanding traits verbally to her and to others. Do so, not in the subtle and assumed way most do it, rather through private and public praise.

Do the same for a parent.
To My Mom and to Your Mom

(excerpt from: From Me to My Children by Ricky Cohen)

Dear Mom,
How could we ever thank you for loving us - even and most outstandingly - when we least deserved it.

What an interesting thing...
you fought to keep showering us with your love.
We took it.

And then ultimately we left you to further our own lives in playing your role with our children.

And you became a burden to us:
"You've grown old"
"You're out of touch"
"You're no longer able to do this or understand that..."

Isn't it funny how quickly we were ready to temper our love for you with all kinds of qualifications?
Isn't it funny, you never said about us:

"He doesn't walk well

nor can he eat on his own or read yet"

You knew that was part of life's passage for us
and you never used it to excuse giving us all the love we needed. How is it that now we have become smarter than you and you less than us?
How is it that we feel we may respect ourselves and where we are in life, more than we may respect you, where you are, and where you've been?
A child's prayer should simply be that he may love his mom as unconditionally as she loved him.

What courage that will take. What a life building and fulfilling love that will be.

Warmest regards,
Ricky

**Sir Jonathan Sacks
Chief Rabbi of the United
Hebrew Congregations
of the Commonwealth**

Our parsha contains the most serene description of old age and dying anywhere in the Torah: "Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people" (Gen. 25: 8). There is an earlier verse, no less moving: "Abraham was old, well advanced in years, and God had blessed Abraham with everything" (Gen. 24: 1).

Nor was this serenity the gift of Abraham alone. Rashi was puzzled by the description of Sarah – "Sarah lived to be 127 years old: [These were] the years of Sarah's life" (23: 1). The last phrase seems completely superfluous. Why not just tell us that Sarah lived to the age of 127? What is added by saying that "these were the years of Sarah's life"? Rashi is forced to the conclusion that the first half of

the verse talks about the quantity of her life, how long she lived, while the second tells us about the quality of her life. "They – the years she lived – were all equal in goodness."

Yet how is any of this conceivable? Abraham and Sarah were commanded by God to leave everything that was familiar: their land, their home, their family, and travel to an unknown land. No sooner had they arrived than they were forced to leave because of famine. Twice, Abraham's life was at risk when, driven into exile, he worried that he would be killed so that the local ruler could take Sarah into his harem. Sarah herself had to say that she was Abraham's sister, and had to suffer the indignity of being taken into a stranger's household.

Then there was the long wait for a child, made even more painful by the repeated Divine promise that they would have as many children as the stars of the sky or the dust of the earth. Then came the drama of the birth of Ishmael to Sarah's servant Hagar. This aggravated the relation between the two women, and eventually Abraham had to send Hagar and Ishmael away. One way or another, this was a source of pain to all four people involved.

Then there was the agony of the binding of Isaac. Abraham was faced with the prospect of losing the person most precious to him, the child he had waited for so long. One way or another, neither Abraham nor Sarah had an easy life. Theirs were lives of trial, in which their faith was tested at many points. How can Rashi say that all of Sarah's years were equal in goodness? How can the Torah say that Abraham had been blessed with everything?

The answer is given by the parsha itself, and it is very unexpected. Seven times Abraham had been promised the land. Here is just one of those occasions:

The Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Raise your eyes, and, from the place where you are now [standing], look to the north, to the south, to the east, and to the west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. . . . Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you" (Gen. 13: 14-17).

Yet by the time Sarah dies, Abraham has no land at all, and he is forced to prostrate himself before the local Hittites and beg for permission to acquire even a single field with a cave in which to bury his wife. Even then he has to pay what is clearly a massively inflated price: four hundred silver shekels. This does not sound like the fulfillment of the promise of "all the land, north, south, east and west."

Then, in relation to children, Abraham is promised four times: "I will make you into a great nation" (12: 2). "I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth" (13: 16). God "took [Abram] outside and said, 'Look at the sky and count the stars. See if you can count them.' [God] then said to him, 'That is how [numerous] your descendants will be.'" (15: 5). "No longer shall you be called Abram. Your name shall become Abraham, for I have set you up as the father of many nations" (17: 5).

Yet he had to wait so long for even a single son by Sarah that when God insisted that she would indeed have a son, both Abraham (17: 17) and Sarah (18: 12) laughed. (The sages differentiated between these two

episodes, saying that Abraham laughed with joy, Sarah with disbelief. In general, in Genesis, the verb tz-ch-k, to laugh, is fraught with ambiguity).

One way or another, whether we think of children or the land – the two key Divine promises to Abraham and Sarah – the reality fell far short of what they might have felt entitled to expect.

That, however, is precisely the meaning and message of Chayei Sarah. In it Abraham does two things: he buys the first plot in the land of Canaan, and he arranges for the marriage of Isaac. One field and a cave was, for Abraham, enough for the text to say that "God had blessed Abraham with everything." One child, Isaac, by then married and with children (Abraham was 100 when Isaac was born; Isaac was sixty when the twins, Jacob and Esau, were born; and Abraham was 175 when he died) was enough for Abraham to die in peace.

Lao-Tzu, the Chinese sage, said that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. To that Judaism adds, "It is not for you to complete the work but neither are you free to desist from it" (Avot 2: 16). God himself said of Abraham, "For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him" (Gen. 18: 19).

The meaning of this is clear. If you ensure that your children will continue to live for what you have lived for, then you can have faith that they will continue your journey until eventually they reach the destination. Abraham did not need to see all the land in Jewish hands, nor did he need to

see the Jewish people become numerous. He had taken the first step. He had begun the task, and he knew that his descendants would continue it. He was able to die serenely because he had faith in God and faith that others would complete what he had begun. The same was surely true of Sarah.

To place your life in God's hands, to have faith that whatever happens to you happens for a reason, to know that you are part of a larger narrative, and to believe that others will continue what you began, is to achieve a satisfaction in life that cannot be destroyed by circumstance. Abraham and Sarah had that faith, and they were able to die with a sense of fulfillment.

To be happy does not mean that you have everything you want or everything you were promised. It means, simply, to have done what you were called on to do, to have made a beginning, and then to have passed on the baton to the next generation. "The righteous, even in death, are regarded as though they were still alive" (Berakhot 18a) because the righteous leave a living trace in those who come after them.

That was enough for Abraham and Sarah, and it must be enough for us.