

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

HAYYE SARAH

Haftarah: Melachim I 1:1-31

NOVEMBER 7, 2015 25 HESHVAN 5776

Rosh Hodesh Kislev will be celebrated on Thursday & Friday, November 12 & 13.

DEDICATIONS: In memory of Yosef ben Esther

Minha & Arbit 4:29PM -Candle Lighting 4:29 PM

Friends – We need assistance and a commitment for Friday evenings
Sisterhood will be having a Friday night dinner in the Synagogue for those who reserved

Shabbat NEW TIME FOR THE WINTER SEASON

Class with Rav Aharon 8:30AM – Latest Shema 8:23 AM

Shahrit 9:00 AM, Torah not before 10:00 and Musaf not before 10:45AM

Devar Torah by Rabbi Yosef Colish this week

Danny and Rina Hirsch are sponsoring the kiddush this week in honor of Rina's father's yahrzeit
Avi Limor - Avraham ben Mordecai.

Please be generous and donate a Kiddush

Mincha Follows Kiddush – Amida after 12:04PM

Shabbat Morning Children's Program 10:30 - 11:30 with Jennifer

Ages 2-5 - in the Playroom/

Girls Ages 6-12 - In the Upstairs Library / Treats, Games, Stories, Prayers and Fun!

Children's program at Sephardic at 4:30PM –

Ladies Class at the Lembergers at 4:30

Seudah Shelishi at Home

Shabbat Ends at 5:28

Return for Arbit at 6:40 PM

SUNDAY MORNING Shaharit at 8AM

Organizing Jewish Observant Cub Pack

See Flyer in Newsletter

And come this Sunday to the Synagogue to Learn More – 9AM

DAILY MINYAN

Monday, Thursday 6:55, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday at 7:00AM

Special Thanks to Denise Ford and Sam Pinto

On Friday Afternoon Denise Ford our county legislator, donated on behalf of the county an AED Defibrillator to the Synagogue. While we hope to not need this expensive piece of life saving equipment, we are very appreciative of the county legislator's donation.

We should show our appreciation to Denise Ford by calling her office at (516) 571-6204.

We also want to thank Sam Pinto for helping to make this happen.

Sisterhood dinner Tuesday evening November 17

Honoring Baruch and Karen Kahn.

Please take the time to settle your outstanding pledges and obligations

To make a payment or donate on line

Please visit

<http://www.benaiasher.org/donate-online/>

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CUB SCOUT



A Cub Scout Pack is being organized in
Hewlett-East Rockaway Jewish Center

FAMILIES LOOKING FOR ADVENTURE?



All boys ages 7-10 (Grades 1-5) are invited to
join together with their parents

Start-up meeting is scheduled for
Thursday Evening, November 19, 2015
At 7:30 PM at HERJC



Please contact
Larry Fener - 516-551-4676

or

Stephanie Ozner - 516-599-1148



Exciting Activities
Lots of Adventure
Learning Skills for Living
Jewish Observance Fulfilled
Making Friends
Advancing at Your Own Pace



**DO YOUR
BEST!**

Any Temple member who has Scouting experience or is an Eagle Scout is invited to participate

To subscribe or to unsubscribe, please reply to
ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com
 Newsletter archives now at BenaiAsher.Org

Starting this week, Mincha and Arbit!
Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue,
17th Floor, Artistic Frame at 4PM – Please join us!
212-289-2100 – Mincha/Arbit –Give us 22
minutes and we'll give you the World To Come!

Editors Notes

HaMachpelah – Connecting Heaven and Earth

Four times this week, Shabbat afternoon, Monday and Thursday morning and again on Shabbat, we will have read the opening chapter of the portion of Chaye Sarah; seventeen of twenty verses relating to the purchase of the field and cave of Machpelah by Abraham our father from Ephron the Hittite for 400 Large Shekel of Silver.

We read that Sarah died in Kiryat-arba which is Hebron in the land of Canaan". Abraham returns from the binding of Isaac and Sarah has died. Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her. His pain must have been enormous and although we said that the binding of Isaac was the last of Abraham's tests, this too must have been an enormous trial. G-d has promised him the entire land from north to south, from east to west, everywhere his feet passed, yet he does not even have a six foot plot to bury his wife and must go begging.

After a while, he stood up and spoke to the children of Het, requesting a place to bury his dead among them. They acknowledge his request and promise that for Abraham "the lord and prince of G-d", he may bury Sarah wherever he likes. Abraham rises again to speak, and bows to them requesting to purchase at full value, the cave of Machpelah from Ephron located at the end of his field. Ephron rises – lots of rising - and states that he will give Abraham, not only the cave, but the entire field. The negotiation continues and Abraham again requests to pay. Ephron sets the price at 400 Shekel, for between us, what is the importance of money. I always felt that Abraham was meant to counter offer as is the way of the Middle Eastern market. Instead he confirms and counts out the money in front of everyone and takes possession.

The burial of Sarah appears to be the first commercial transaction mentioned in the Torah. If it is a study in business and negotiating skills, who seems to win? It appears that Ephron laughed all the way to the bank for selling that worthless cave for such an exorbitant amount. And perhaps Abraham chose not to negotiate so that in the future no one could ever

say that the field and the cave were not purchased fairly. Written for all to see is how one of the original Palestinians sold the land to Abraham. Unfortunately what was written didn't leave much of an impression on Moshe Dayan, but more about that later. Yet what perhaps was a dark useless cavern to Ephron, was so much more to Abraham. The Midrash says that when Abraham was ready to slaughter the calf for his guests, the calf ran away. Abraham chased it all the way to the cave of Machpelah in Hebron.

A portal in science fiction is a technological or magical doorway that connects two distant locations separated by space and/or time. It usually consists of two or more gateways, with an object entering one gateway leaving via the other instantaneously. According to the kabbalists, and according to many who follow Sephardic tradition, prior to doing any misvah, we recite a short prayer called the Leshem Yichud in Aramaic. Loosely it translates as follows: "For the sake of the unity of the Holy One, Blessed Be He, and His Shekhina, in love and awe, and in awe and love to unite the letters Yod Hey with Vav Hey in a perfect union, in the name of all Yisrael, behold I have come to perform this mitzvah". In my mind (and as I am not a kabbalist, I may be very wrong) ... we have in mind to draw down that which is above signified by the first two letters of Hashems name, the Yud and the Heh – perhaps we can imagine the holiness or the light - to that which is below signified by the last two letters – the vav and the heh. At the same time we who are below seek to raise the lower world, to the higher world – imagining bringing the darkness up to light or the physical up to spiritual and unifying all.

After the purchase of the field by Abraham from Ephron, the verse states that the field rose. How does a field rise? Rashi suggests that the status of the field rose from that of land of a commoner to that of land of a king, but perhaps there is more to it. The International Bible Encyclopedia explains HaMachpelah as - The name of a piece of ground and of a cave purchased by Abraham as a place of sepulcher. The word is supposed to mean "double" and refers to the condition of the cave. It is translated "double cave" (to diploun spelaion) in the Septuagint. Rashi states that the burial place was also known as "Ma'arat Ha'Machpelah," the cave of Machpelah, meaning the double cave, because it consisted of a "bah'yit," a lower floor, with an upper floor on top. An alternative explanation cited by Rashi, explains that the cave was "doubled," with only married couples buried there.

Abraham refers to the cave as HaMachpelah, there is the letter Heh at the beginning and the letter Heh at the end. The Zohar tells us that the concept of the doubling of the letter Heh and the cave of doubles is highly significant in connecting the above with that which is below.

I though kept coming back to this idea of a portal. The 16th century sage, Rav Avrohom Azulai in his sefer Chesed L'Avrohom discusses this portal. He explains that Hashem's wisdom decreed the making of a portal from the Cave of Machpelah to the Garden of Eden in order that the souls of the righteous be able to pass through directly without encountering any harmful creatures.

Adam and Chavah knew this secret and therefore they endeavored to be buried there, and after they were buried there the mouth of the cave was sealed so that no one would know about the specialness of the place. That was until Abraham discovered it. The Zohar Hadash on Ruth explains: Hashem Himself created Adam and He Himself took care of Adam at his death. No one knew of Adam's burial place until Abraham came, entered the cave and saw him. As Abraham entered, the place was filled with the scent of the Garden of Eden and the voice of the ministering angels saying: "Adam is buried here. Abraham and Isaac will be prepared for this place." Abraham saw the lit candle and went out. At that moment he developed a desire for the place.

HaMachpelah is in many ways the symbol of connecting the upper world and the lower world as are those who are buried there with Adam and Eve. Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Leah are all symbolic of drawing the light of the upper worlds down and raising the lower world to the light. What Ephron saw as a dark cave was actually a cave of light.

We have written previously about the miraculous single handed liberation of the area in 1967 by the Chief Rabbi of the Israel Defense Forces, the late Major-General Rabbi Shlomo Goren, who with his driver conquered a city of 80,000 Arabs. He was the first Jew to return to Hebron and enter the Cave of Machpelah in seven hundred years.

Driving into Hebron, Rabbi Goren was greeted by the sight of white sheets, hung from roof-tops and windows, throughout the city. He was astounded, but understood. In the summer of 1929, Arab residents of Hebron had massacred 67 Jews and wounded many others. The 1967 Arabs of Hebron were, very plainly, scared of Jewish retaliation. So, they did not fire one

shot. Instead they hung white sheets from windows and roof-tops.

Rabbi Goren quickly made his way to the Cave of Machpela. Finding the huge doors bolted, he tried breaking in by shooting at the lock, firing his Uzi submachine gun. Finally, after getting into Ma'arat HaMachpela he blew the Shofar, as he had done 24 hours earlier at the Western Wall.

Rabbi Goren hung an Israeli flag outside the Ma'ara and brought a Sefer Torah inside. The next day he received a telegram from Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan. It read, "Take down the flag, take out the Sefer Torah, and everyone who enters must take off his shoes, because the building is a Mosque!" Rabbi Goren sent back a telegram saying, "The Sefer Torah is Kodesh (holy) - it stays. The flag means to me what it means to you. If you want to remove it, do so. I will not touch it."

Dayan sent an officer into Hebron to remove the flag and Torah. Since then, Jews have been struggling to regain their prayer rights at the site, still run by the Muslim Waqf that took control during the Arab conquest. Many restrictions are imposed on Jewish prayers and customs at the Tomb of the Patriarchs despite the site's significance, primacy and sanctity in Jewish heritage and history.

Yet we must endeavor to go to HaMachpela, perhaps second in holiness only to the Temple itself. We should draw from the power of the Avot buried there as our ancestor Caleb did and all be a part of drawing holiness to earth and raising earth up to holiness.

Shabbat Shalom,

David Bibi

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading Chayah Sara- Eliezer finds a wife for Yitshak

- 1- Sara dies. Abraham buys a burial plot for her in Ma'arat Ha'machpela.
- 2- Abraham sends Eliezer to find Yitshak a wife
- 3- Eliezer sees Rivka by the well
- 4- Eliezer meets Betuel and Laban
- 5- Rivka meets Yitshak and marries her
- 6- Abraham marries Ketura and has 6 children. Abraham dies
- 7- The children of Yishmael. Yishmael dies.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

“To eulogize and to bewail her.” (Beresheet 23:2)

The Sages teach that the narratives of Sarah’s death and the Akedah follow one another to indicate that she died as a result of that event. She was told by Satan that Abraham had actually slaughtered Yitzhak, and she cried in grief and died (Targum Yonatan). This explains why Abraham and Yitzhak were not present at her death.

Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky zt”l explained that this cannot mean that Sarah died “accidentally” before her time. It can be proven later from Rashi’s comments on pasuk 27:2. Rather, the sense of the Targum Yonatan is that Sarah’s time had come in any case, but the immediate cause of death was the news of the Akedah.

There is an obvious question here. The Akedah was one of the ten tests of Abraham. How could it be that Sarah was unable to withstand this test? After all, we must do the will of Hashem. Furthermore, we don’t find that this was considered as a lacking on the part of Sarah. Rashi comments in the beginning of the perashah that at one hundred years old, she had no sin like a twenty-year-old.

Rabbi Reuven Melamed answers this question with an important fundamental idea about our religion, that Hashem doesn’t ask a person to do more than he is able to do. Sarah did not have in her soul the ability to withstand this test. It was only Abraham that was tested because Hashem saw that Abraham had the ability to do it if he concentrated and tried his very best. But, for Sarah it was above her ability. So she didn’t fail the test, she wasn’t being tested.

Hashem knows us better than we know ourselves. And as the Gemara says, “All that Hashem does is for the best. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

“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. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

HOW YOU SAY IT

A major difficulty associated with world travel is the language barrier. When you go to a place where you neither speak nor understand the language of its inhabitants, all the simple things in life become difficult. When burdened with a language barrier, the strangers you meet regard you as strange.

The communication of ideas through speech is a benefit that humans have and other creatures lack. Yes, there are mating calls and warning signals that other living things use for survival, but these beings do not have the luxury of forming ideas, drawing conclusions, and the communicating their findings. Animals can share food and shelter, but they cannot share ideas.

Some people have a knack for communicating. They not only know what to say, but also how to say it. Don’t think it is all natural talent, either. The power of communicating comes from study and thought. You can learn vocabulary to help define the exact ideas you want to convey. You can study the aspects of proper delivery of a thought through the correct use of voice, cadence, and body language. But the primary element is thought. You must think about the listener and decide how he or she can best understand the idea being discussed.

When you want to get your idea across to another, stop and think before you speak. Consider the listener and customize your words. It only takes a minute to prepare your thoughts so as to avoid misunderstanding. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

Visit DailyHalacha.com, DailyGemara.com,
MishnaBerura.com, LearnTorah.com
The Value of Every Moment

The Midrash relates that once, as Rabbi Akiba taught a class, he noticed that his students began falling asleep. In order to awaken and energize them, Rabbi Akiba interrupted his Shiur and spoke about – of all things – the number 127.

The first verse in Parashat Hayeh Sara tells that Sara Imenu lived to the age of 127, and in Megilat Ester we read that Ahashverosh ruled over 127 provinces.

Rabbi Akiba told his students that this is not coincidental. He told his students, "Why did Ester rule over 127 provinces? Let the descendant of Sara, who lived to the age of 127, rule over 127 provinces." Ester rose to power over 127 provinces in the merit of her ancestor, Sara, who lived to the age of 127.

What exactly is the connection between Sara's age at her death and Ester's becoming queen, and why did Rabbi Akiba choose this insight as the way of waking up his drowsy students?

One of my Rabbis explained that through this observation, Rabbi Akiba gently reprimanded his students for sleeping through the class. For each year of Sara's life, Ester was granted power over an entire province. For each month, she ruled over a city, and each month was rewarded with a town. If we break it down even further, we will find that for every second of her life, she was rewarded with an entire block over which her descendant, Queen Ester, ruled.

Rabbi Akiba thus sought to impress upon his students the value, potential and significance of every moment of life. Sara received immense reward for each and every second of her life, because she devoted all her time and energy to the service of Hashem. This was the subtle Mussar (religious teaching) that Rabbi Akiba, in his pedagogical brilliance, conveyed to his sleepy students. We cannot squander such a valuable resource as a time – not even a minute! Each moment is precious and laden with great potential. What a shame it would be to waste our time in a Shiur by sleeping, or, certainly, to waste the time in vain pursuits and not show up at the Shiur at all.

Every moment of life is a precious, invaluable commodity – and should be taken advantage of in full.

SOD HAPARSHA – VICTOR BIBI

First Scenario Soul-mates

The sages teach us that when the souls were originally formed they were comprised of both male and female. Prior to entering the world these two aspects of the soul split and are separated. During man's initial entry into the world, his soulmate comes with him. When the time for him to marry arrives, she will be given to him immediately without any impediments. The Talmud references this initial unification of the soul as their *זיווג ראשון* - or this couples' first union. It is this; our first scenario which is the initial marriage of soul-mates that is predetermined at their

conception. As the Rabbis have taught "forty days before the formation of an embryo, a heavenly voice proclaims: the daughter of this one is destined to marry this one." (Sanhedrin 22)

Second Scenario

The Talmud cites an apparent contradictory teaching. "It is difficult to pair (a man and woman) for marriage as it was to split the sea of reeds. *קריעת ים סוף*. Since one's mate is apparently determined from the time of conception, why is it so difficult to pair them later on? The Talmud resolves the inquiry. The first idea that matches are determined at conception was said exclusively regarding *זיווג ראשון* - loosely translated as the first marriage. The second idea that matchmaking is as difficult as splitting the sea was said exclusively regarding *זיווג שני* - loosely translated as the second marriage. The reality is that man often sins in his sojourn here, requiring him to come back to this world for his rectification in the secret of *גלות* transmigration of souls. In this second scenario we reference the verse *ויצאה אשתו עמו* - his soul-mate descends back into this world to assist him in his rectification. When the time comes for him to marry, she is not given to him without accusations from above. This manifests itself as impediments in finding his soul-mate to marry. He is subject to this due to faulty behavior in a previous lifetime. Hence, the union is said to be challenging and is termed as *קריעת ים סוף* - as difficult as splitting the sea. The Talmud calls this *זיווג שני* - a reunification of soul-mates who did not properly complete their task together during their initial time on earth. The union is not termed *זיווג שנית* second mate; but rather *זיווג שני* - a second union between soul-mates. We often see couples who encounter difficulties in finding each other but live harmoniously together once married.

Third Scenario

There is a third scenario to be learned from another apparent contradiction found in a parallel narrative in Sotah. "When Rish Lakish would open his lecture on Sotah he would say: They (the heavenly court) pair a woman for a man in marriage only in accordance with his deeds. Why if predetermined at conception would a woman be prepared for a man only according to his deeds? The Talmud is teaching us here that failure to make *Tikun* - spiritual correction in ones' initial lifetime does not guarantee a second chance to unite with ones' soul-mate in future incarnations. Namely, if he does not merit to advance himself spiritually, there is the possibility he will not merit to even marry his soul-mate. Hence, his fate in this matter will be judged according to his deeds. For he is forewarned that if one's deeds are not satisfactory someone else may take his chosen mate.

Fourth Scenario

There is a fourth scenario which occurs due to the spiritual law that though woman often return to this world in *זיגלגול* is not absolutely necessary for their spiritual correction. Hence a male will not meet his predetermined mate because his female counterpart did not descend into the world. In this case he will be paired with a female whose mate was not meritorious. The Zohar advises concerning one whose deeds are proper but with a female who has not descended where he should search for a worthy mate. Our sages teach us, "One should attempt to marry a daughter of a scholar. For her soul is likely elevated due to the proper thoughts of her father during conception" (Pesachim 49). The Zohar explains that all souls who return from their prior incarnation without the company of their soulmate may preempt another in mercy through prayer by marrying the other's soul-mate. Concerning this the Rabbis were aroused to declare that marriages are not carried out on the Mo'ed, but one may have kiddushin (engagement) on the holiday lest another one whose soulmate has not descended with him, (but may have enough meritorious deeds to marry his friend's soulmate) preempt him through mercy. An exception is made to the rule disallowing engagements on the holiday for fear that by the delay, another man will marry one's intended soulmate. Correctly the rabbis have said "another". Meaning a stranger who is not the soul mate of this woman.

Yishak and Rivka - Second Scenario

Rivka's brother Lavan responds to Eliezer's proposal that she marry Yishak by declaring *מה' יצא הדבר* - "the matter stemmed from Hashem". Simply it was evident from the order in which matters occurred that a higher power was involved here. This match was in the domain of Hashem's celestial forces of which they had no ability in which to interfere! It is easy to assume that Lavan himself and his descendants (Bilaam) are the ultimate antagonists of the nation of Israel! What moved him to see the matter so clearly that he lost any ability to intervene and prevent the Holy marriage of Yishak to Rivka? It appears to me that this union fits into the second scenario mentioned above. Yishak would have to find his soul-mate from a previous lifetime. He would be able to remove any impediments in marrying her only if he would raise himself spiritually. Once he can accomplish this his soul-mate would be granted him from Hashem with little or no possibility of failure.

The Midrash (BR 60:10) reveals that Lavan's statement attributing the matter to Hashem was in reference to what happened three years prior on Har HaMoriah. Yishak through the Akedah (willingly to be bound and sacrificed) raised himself spiritually to such an extent clearing the way for Rivka to descend in preparation to unite once again with her soul-mate. Lavan realized that Abraham at that time had been advised from Hashem that Rivka had

been born and all has been set into motion. Any opposition would be futile. Once Yishak ascended spiritually through the act of the Akedah, his future meeting with his soul-mate was secured by Hashem which even Lavan had to readily admit.

Rabbi Wein WHO KNOWS TWELVE?

In the interests of transparency and honesty, let me state at the outset here that this brilliant essay is completely self-serving and personally motivated. But nevertheless it does, in my opinion, contain ideas and insights that may prove worthwhile to my long-suffering loyal readers. The name of my newly published book is "Who Knows Twelve – Insights and Values From the Book of Trei-Asar (The Twelve Prophets)."

The book is a culmination of research and ruminations that have gathered in my mind, living here in Jerusalem over the past few years. It became clear to me that a true appreciation of the words of prophecy of these great and holy men of Israel is much easier to achieve when living in the Land of Israel rather than when in an apparently gilded Diaspora environment.

The literal starkness of the words of these prophets is an every day experience here in Israel. Both the good and the better are omnipresent in Israeli life and in the events that befall our society here. A true student of Trei-Asar is not surprised or blindsided by the occurrences that are part of our existence here in the Holy Land. It has all been predicted and described for us in varying amounts of directness by the great prophets of Israel.

The clarity of vision and the insight that God has a master plan, so to speak, for the Jewish people and the world generally is one of the most basic and encouraging ideas that emanates from all of the twelve prophets of Trei-Asar, and that no matter what twists and turns humans take, it is His will that eventually will be done.

Some of the wondrous events that have occurred in Jewish society and especially here in the Land of Israel are the basic topics of the prophets of Trei-Asar. The ingathering of the exiles of the Jewish people was a long cherished hope of the Jewish people but for millennia it was only a forlorn and distant dream. There was no sense of reality present as how this immense migration would occur and how a small, then arid and desolate land would somehow be able to accommodate these incoming hordes.

But the prophets of Israel all said that it would somehow happen and be successful. And that is exactly what has occurred. There naturally have been many hiccups along this way. The maabarot of the 50's, the discrimination against different groups of immigrants, the dislocation and dysfunction that must accompany such a wrenching change of location and societal mores, all accompanied the realization of the dream of the ages and the fulfillment of the prophesy of the men of Trei-Asar.

Yet, in the big picture, which is how the prophets of Trei-Asar always saw the world, the ingathering of the exiles would occur. And so it has, albeit in a somewhat surprisingly quiet and almost unnoticed fashion. The prophets of Trei-Asar always dealt with strategy and not tactics, results and not with details.

One of the more unfortunate characteristics of current Jewish education is the complete neglect of the study of Trei-Asar. Somehow, this magnificent work has fallen between the cracks in the curriculum that exist in Jewish education.

There would be a better sense of current events and future hopes and plans if people knew and appreciated the ideas and insights of these prophets. There would be an understanding of the arc of Jewish history and of the momentous times that we now live in. We would be less bogged down in the pettiness and political smallness that is the daily grist of our media and news reporting.

We would be able to better identify the true moral issues that face us and react to them in a confident and positive fashion. The words of the prophets would inspire boldness and self-confidence, a belief in our cause and the righteousness of our beliefs. We would be less discouraged by the absence of easy solutions to our difficult existential threats and problems. In short, we would be a happier and more serene society, even in the face of hostility and hypocritical bigotry and discrimination.

The purpose of the prophets of Trei-Asar was to guide and counsel us, to inspire and strengthen us in our times of difficulty and challenge. But they cannot accomplish their mission if we are unaware of their words and presence amongst us. They are of no influence whatever if we do not study their works and share their visions. Who knows twelve? We should all answer, "I do!"

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks Faith in the Future

He was 137 years old. He had been through two traumatic events involving the people most precious to him in the world. The first involved the son for whom he had waited for a lifetime, Isaac. He and Sarah had given up hope, yet God told them both that they would have a son together, and it would be he who would continue the covenant. The years passed. Sarah did not conceive. She had grown old, yet God still insisted they would have a child.

Eventually it came. There was rejoicing. Sarah said: "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." Then came the terrifying moment when God said to Abraham: "Take your son, your only one, the one you love," and offer him as a sacrifice. Abraham did not dissent, protest or delay. Father and son traveled together, and only at the last moment did the command come from heaven saying, "Stop". How does a father, let alone a son, survive a trauma like that?

Then came grief. Sarah, Abraham's beloved wife, died. She had been his constant companion, sharing the journey with him as they left behind all they knew, their land, their birthplace and their families. Twice she saved Abraham's life by pretending to be his sister.

What does a man of 137 do – the Torah calls him "old and advanced in years" – after such a trauma and such a bereavement? We would not be surprised to find that he spent the rest of his days in sadness and memory. He had done what God had asked of him. Yet he could hardly say that God's promises had been fulfilled. Seven times he had been promised the land of Canaan, yet when Sarah died he owned not one square-inch of it, not even a place in which to bury his wife. God had promised him many children, a great nation, many nations, as many as the grains of sand in the sea shore and the stars in the sky. Yet he had only one son of the covenant, Isaac, whom he had almost lost, and who was still unmarried at the age of thirty-seven. Abraham had every reason to sit and grieve.

Yet he did not. In one of the most extraordinary sequences of words in the Torah, his grief is described in a mere five Hebrew words: in English, "Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her." Then immediately we read, "And Abraham rose from his grief." From then on, he engaged in a flurry of activity with two aims in mind: first to buy a plot of land in which to bury Sarah, second to find a wife for his son. Note that these correspond precisely to the

two Divine blessings: of land and descendants. Abraham did not wait for God to act. He understood one of the profoundest truths of Judaism: that God is waiting for us to act.

How did Abraham overcome the trauma and the grief? How do you survive almost losing your child and actually losing your life-partner and still have the energy to keep going? What gave Abraham his resilience, his ability to survive, his spirit intact?

I learned the answer from the people who became my mentors in moral courage, namely the Holocaust survivors I had the privilege to know. How, I wondered, did they keep going, knowing what they knew, seeing what they saw? We know that the British and American soldiers who liberated the camps never forgot what they witnessed. According to Niall Ferguson's new biography of Henry Kissinger, who entered the camps as an American soldier, the sight that met his eyes transformed his life. If this was true of those who merely saw Bergen-Belsen and the other camps, how almost infinitely more so, those who lived there and saw so many die there. Yet the survivors I knew had the most tenacious hold on life. I wanted to understand how they kept going.

Eventually I discovered. Most of them did not talk about the past, even to their marriage partners, even to their children. Instead they set about creating a new life in a new land. They learned its language and customs. They found work. They built careers. They married and had children. Having lost their own families, the survivors became an extended family to one another. They looked forward, not back. First they built a future. Only then – sometimes forty or fifty years later – did they speak about the past. That was when they told their story, first to their families, then to the world. First you have to build a future. Only then can you mourn the past.

Two people in the Torah looked back, one explicitly, the other by implication. Noah, the most righteous man of his generation, ended his life by making wine and becoming drunk. The Torah does not say why but we can guess. He had lost an entire world. While he and his family were safe on board the ark, everyone else – all his contemporaries – had drowned. It is not hard to imagine this righteous man overwhelmed by grief as he replayed in his mind all that had happened, wondering whether he might have done something to save more lives or avert the catastrophe.

Lot's wife, against the instruction of the angels, actually did look back as the cities of the plain

disappeared under fire and brimstone and the anger of God. Immediately she was turned into a pillar of salt, the Torah's graphic description of a woman so overwhelmed by shock and grief as to be unable to move on.

It is the background of these two stories that helps us understand Abraham after the death of Sarah. He set the precedent: first build the future, and only then can you mourn the past. If you reverse the order, you will be held captive by the past. You will be unable to move on. You will become like Lot's wife.

Something of this deep truth drove the work of one of the most remarkable survivors of the Holocaust, the psychotherapist Viktor Frankl. Frankl lived through Auschwitz, dedicating himself to giving other prisoners the will to live. He tells the story in several books, most famously in *Man's Search for Meaning*. He did this by finding for each of them a task that was calling to them, something they had not yet done but that only they could do. In effect, he gave them a future. This allowed them to survive the present and turn their minds away from the past.

Frankl lived his teachings. After the liberation of Auschwitz he built a school of psychotherapy called Logotherapy, based on the human search for meaning. It was almost an inversion of the work of Freud. Freudian psychoanalysis had encouraged people to think about their very early past. Frankl taught people to build a future, or more precisely, to hear the future calling to them. Like Abraham, Frankl lived a long and good life, gaining worldwide recognition and dying at the age of 92.

Abraham heard the future calling to him. Sarah had died. Isaac was unmarried. Abraham had neither land nor grandchildren. He did not cry out, in anger or anguish, to God. Instead, he heard the still, small voice saying: The next step depends on you. You must create a future that I will fill with My spirit. That is how Abraham survived the shock and grief. God forbid that we experience any of this, but if we do, this is how to survive.

God enters our lives as a call from the future. It is as if we hear him beckoning to us from the far horizon of time, urging us to take a journey and undertake a task that, in ways we cannot fully understand, we were created for. That is the meaning of the word vocation, literally "a calling", a mission, a task to which we are summoned.

We are not here by accident. We are here because God wanted us to be, and because there is a task we were meant to fulfill. Discovering what that is, is not

easy, and often takes many years and false starts. But for each of us there is something God is calling on us to do, a future not yet made that awaits our making. It is future-orientation that defines Judaism as a faith, as I explain in the last chapter of my book, Future Tense.

So much of the anger, hatred and resentments of this world are brought about by people obsessed by the past and who, like Lot's wife, are unable to move on. There is no good ending to this kind of story, only more tears and more tragedy. The way of Abraham in Chayei Sarah is different. First build the future. Only then can you mourn the past

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z"TL "And Sarah died" (23:2)

This was the destruction of the first and greatest Bet Hamikdash. "The wise woman builds her house" (Mishle 14:1), and "the heart of her husband safely trusted in her" (ibid. 31:2), "she stretched out her hand to the poor" (ibid. 31:20), "she opened her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of (G-d's) kindness was on her tongue" (ibid. 31:26); "she looked well to the ways of her household" (ibid. 31:27); "her husband (arose) and praised her" (ibid. 31:28); "many daughters have done valiantly, but you excelled them all" (ibid. 31:29).

Such a house never reappeared. Abraham continued in all his personal excellence, but with the passing of Sarah there came an end to the unsurpassed achievement of the first and greatest house of Israel. The destruction of the Mishkan of Shiloh was a sad day for our nation, and we forever mourn the loss of the first and second Sanctuaries of Jerusalem. But the end of Sarah's house was an event of far greater import. The era that blessed the world with the combined idealism of Abraham and Sarah was never repeated. Although their tent serves forever as a model, yet it was in itself an eternal achievement. Rabbi Yochanan declared: "G-d shall restore the habitations of the righteous" (Berachot 58B).

Whatever is inscribed in the Torah is forever. Although Hashem wishes that men continue to make every effort to uphold and to disseminate His ways in the land of the living, yet the achievements of the righteous live on forever. Just as the holy tent of Sarah lives on in our Torah, so does it continue to exist in an indestructible manner until Hashem shall restore it to a more glorious physical existence. This is one of the purposes of inscribing these matters in the Torah, to point out that they are permanent.

We must note that also Sarah is indicated as a model for those that pursue righteousness & seek Hashem.

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